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Everyday life, everyday songs: a re-valuation of song sequences in popular Hindi films of the 1950s

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EVERYDAY LIFE, EVERYDAY SONGS:
A RE-VALUATION OF SONG SEQUENCES IN POPULAR HINDI FILMS OF THE 1950s

by

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PREFACE

Whenever I speak about this project to other Indians literate in this era, I am always met with surprise, they asking me why I "even need to do this." To them, all of this has a similar obviousness I felt when I first began conceptualizing the project. Perhaps because of these films, or more broadly, because of the widespread indoctrination of the various social, cultural, and religious conventions I address here, on some level we *all* already behave like these characters, and for them, my pointing out the specific societal conventions that dictate these "obvious" behaviours was almost a shock. As a result, having to accept that we too, have numerous affective fronts in response to the larger forces that rule our lives presented as a challenge for us to initially process, because most unfortunately, there was no song that could help us negotiate our way through the gravity of these realizations.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a methodology for examining the function of song sequences in popular Hindi films, one that goes against the existing discourses that the songs have no function within the narrative. After differentiating between the heavily discussed spectacle songs and the oft-ignored emotive songs, the latter variety is broken down into three categories determined by setting and the number of singers: absentminded, communicative, and performative. The different types of songs allow the social codification of performance to be seen, where characters navigate the separate public and private spaces within the worlds of the films — worlds dictated by specific social, cultural, religious (Hindu), familial, and romantic conventions. By examining the 1950s specifically, the study shows how these emotive songs clearly allow characters to express themselves in ways otherwise impossible due to the ever-present consideration of "*log kya kahenge?"* ("what will people say?"). There is a noticeable increase in spectacularity in emotive songs over the course of the decade, signaling the shift in the 1960s to more recognizably Bollywood-esque aesthetics, where film songs rely more and more on spectacle and start to lose the affective quality that distinguishes the songs of 1950s. The four films examined are *Babul* (1950)*, Aah* (1953), *Amar* (1954)*,* and *Anari*(1959).

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2018 I watched Yasujiro Ozu's 1949 film *Late Spring* for the first time. For me, the success of the film lies in the expressive performances of actors and characters, performances where their highs, lows, joys, and sorrows are beautifully laid out for us to clearly see and experience. About twenty minutes into the film, my own cultural filmic lens unexpectedly altered my viewing experience, forever changing how I see *Late Spring*. There is a quiet shot of ocean waves crashing onto a beach, and then we cut to a moving shot on a road along the ocean. Happy, jaunty music starts to play, and we see Noriko (Setsuko Hara) and Hattori (Jun Usami) riding their bikes, smiling at each other and at themselves as they take part in an individualised, yet shared, journey. There is so much joy here, and there I was, watching this, every fibre of my being preparing for them to start singing. Everything else happens — I could not have asked for a more perfect set-up! The music is playing, they are together, sharing an emotional moment, and so *obviously*, the next step is to start singing. I waited and waited.

There is no singing in this scene in *Late Spring*, but this perceived obviousness stems from my own upbringing with early popular Hindi and Bollywood films, where songs are a natural part of the filmic life. To me, the scene from *Late Spring* had the same affective quality as songs I had seen before, but when giving voice to these comparisons, I was sometimes met with surprise at the very idea of comparing this valued Ozu work to Indian films, works derided for the very element that makes them so distinctive: the presence of singing and dancing. This initial scepticism made me realise for the first time

how these films are viewed by Western and academic scholarship: generally unfavourably, either because the Parallel Cinema works of Satyajit Ray are preferred, or because the presence of songs signal the films as purely "escapist."

Discussing this transnational viewing experience with *Late Spring* and as a result, popular Hindi films made at the same time, with songs that have the same affective quality as Noriko's bike ride, my friend Mridul and I came to the conclusion that in these moments, the characters are feeling so much "that they *had* to sing," or that "they *needed* to sing because of [reasons]." Basically, the only logical and natural way to express so much feeling is through song. Of course, it has been pointed out to me that because we were raised on Hindi films, and without any awareness of production-year chronology, Mridul and I are steeped in and quite literate in the codes that emerge in Hindi cinema – codes establishing that in certain emotional situations within the narrative there will almost always be a song.

This set of narrative codes functions to make us feel that certain cinematic decisions are the "obvious" thing to do, because of a shared set of expectations that this cinematic tradition has set up across many decades and films regarding the time and place of song. In Indian life and in films, songs will take place at events where music was already bound to happen: religious ceremonies, wedding events, social gatherings, and staged performances. To add to these expected occurrences, as most every film is a love story, every conceivable stage of the relationship can also merit a song: the meet-cute, falling in love, being in love, fighting in love, falling out of love, etc. etc. Growing up on all decades at once, it was not until I had to teach a Bollywood lecture that I was able to

temporally separate the existing codes. This realisation led me to this thesis, where through the examination and historicization of these "obvious" codes, I argue for a reconceptualization of how we look at song sequences in Hindi films, specifically those of the 1950s. Through close analysis of song sequences, both of their formal qualities and place in the narrative, I work show how these songs are giving the characters and audiences alike the opportunity to negotiate the differing social expectations within the social codifications present in each film, such that there is a private and public presentation of self that manifests through song.

Hindi Films in the 1950s

Formally the British Raj, India was made independent in 1947 by way of the Indian Independence Act, the same act also establishing the separation of India and Pakistan (known as Partition). Independence and Partition both dramatically impacted the Indian film industry. India has been producing films since the late 1890s, and prior to Independence, the industry was more akin to the Hollywood studio system in how films were produced.[1] Post-WWII, film studios were backed by private "investors" looking to launder their money. The Film Enquiry Committee of 1950 was formed with the sole purpose of determining how to effectively instrumentalize films, in a propagandistic sense, to best promote "national culture, education, and healthy entertainment," the government ultimately enforcing strict censorship rules.[2] In the early 1950s the

[1] Chakravarty, Sumita S. *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema: 1947-1987*. Austin (Tex.): University of Texas Press, 1993. pg 64

[2] Statement made by the Committee, as quoted in Chakravarty pg. 66

government began establishing national academies for the arts and in 1952 founded the International Film Festival of India, the official national selections including Raj Kapoor's *Awaara*.[3]

In this period of nation- and industry-building, Indian cinema was working to establish itself, a self-determination impacted deeply by Partition – stars were lost to Pakistan, but the transitional period made room for more productions in Bombay and the creation of necessary openings for other stars, notably playback singers, to establish themselves in the Hindi film industry.[4] In the late 1940s playback singing became the preferred methodology for songs by film directors, as not having to cater the songs the to actor or actress's individual abilities allowed for the songs to become more musically complex. Film directors worked closely with music directors, and the choice of music director and lyricist became as influential on audiences as casting decisions.[5] Thus, while songs have played an important role in Indian film since the first "all talking, all singing, all dancing" talkie *Alam Ara*, the political changes of the late 1940s allowed for them to take on a new form and function in Hindi films of the 1950s.

Existing Discourse on Hindi Film Songs

The existing academic discourse on Hindi films presents a wide variety of approaches to the place of songs, with Indian and Western historians, film scholars, anthropologists, and musicologists weighing in on the function of the Hindi film song

[3] Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Indian Cinema: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. pg. 64
[4] Rajadhyaksha, pgs. 49-55
[5] Chakravarty pg. 76

industrially, musically, and in terms of visual pleasure. The latter arguments are usually situated in Western discourses of realism, spectacle, narrative relevance, and comparisons to more highly valued art cinema/ Parallel Cinema.

Using the oft-cited "a star, six songs, three dances" description of Hindi films, scholars often take one of most common approaches and compare them to the Hollywood musical. Because of this inaccurate association with musicals, Hindi film songs are often dismissed as being unrealistic and as presenting an idealised or unrealistic version of the world, something that completely disregards the songs that do not even visually resemble the Hollywood musical song, let alone embody its ideals. For example, in his survey of non-Western popular music, Peter Manuel describes films with songs as "alienating" through their "[refusal] to confront Indian reality" by virtue of their unrealistic and escapist representations of the poor.[6]

Addressing "Indian reality" in terms of realism, Sumita Chakravarty describes the push for realism in films of the 1940s and 50s as a movement reacting to what already existed in films (the popular film genres, mythological and historical epics), these new realist films representing what the future of Indian cinema could be. In her discussion she cites well-known, neorealist-inspired socialist films like *Neecha Nagar* (Chetan Anand, 1946), *Dharti Ke Lal* (K. A. Abbas, 1946), and *Do Bigha Zamin* (Bimal Roy, 1953), but makes no acknowledgement of the fact that all three of these films had songs (this following her claims about the place and importance of song and dance across all Indian social strata). In an extended discussion of *Sujata* (1959), a film about a *dalit* woman

[6] Manuel, Peter Lamarche. *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World: An Introductory Survey*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

being raised in a *brahmin* family, there is no mention of the seven songs from that film.[7] For Chakravarty, it seems that in order to have this discussion of realism, one must completely erase the most seemingly unreal part, that characters will burst into song at various points in the film – despite her assertion that music and singing are very natural parts of Indian culture.

That said, the existence of songs is commonly justified with similar arguments, scholars reminding their reader that music is a part of the Indian and social culture. This justification only goes so far as the presence of songs in the narrative but stops short of saying that the songs are an interactive part of the narrative as a whole. Speaking to the prevalence of song in Indian life, anthropologist Partha Chatterjee states that songs were "bound to be an organic part of the film," saying that it is "only natural" that they be present because the "Indian genius [is] expressed best through song."[8] According to Chatterjee, this perceived "organic" feel is made possible by the vocal performance and tone of the song. He speaks only of the audible quality of the songs, and makes no mention of how the character is presented or the place and function of the song in the film narrative, a confusing distance from the visual nature of the films.

In part due to the connection to musicals, Hindi film songs are often all treated as spectacles that have no part in the narrative. Manuel describes these songs as often being "little more than digressions gratuitously inserted into the plot," a view extended further

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[7] In English, members of the *dalit* caste are known as the "untouchables," and *brahmins* are traditionally seen as the highest caste in the system.

[8] Chatterjee, Partha, 'When melody ruled the day', in Vasudevan (ed.) *Frames of mind: Reflections on Indian cinema* (New Delhi, Newbury Park, Ca: Sage Publications in association with International Institute of Communications, 1987). pg. 51-52

by M. M. Prasad in his Marxist discussion of the Hindi film narrative.[9] This is unfortunate, because the song sequences, seen in the way I present in this thesis, would only have solidified the ideologies that Prasad argues are present in films of this time. Ravi Vasudevan, in *The Melodramatic Public*, frames these "insertions" as just pieces of the film to look at in the realm of the "cinema of attractions." This idea of the songs as small attractions supported by Rachel Dwyer in her characterisation of songs as "pre-packaged" items within the narrative.[10] While Dwyer's assertion is perhaps accurate for some songs, this blanket grouping of all songs present within a film under the same monolithic category does not allow for the nuance I argue many of these songs deserve, and only works to further the popular understanding that all songs are random insertions within the narrative.

Working against this comparison to musicals, Rosie Thomas argues that regardless of genre, all popular Hindi films had songs and therefore, are not musicals in the Hollywood sense of the term.[11] Writing about Indian popular films of the late 70s and 80s, Thomas argues that by applying Western approaches of "textual operations and mechanisms of pleasure," but still staying within the Indian cultural context (the recognisable "Indianisation" of values and the "moral universe" of the film), songs can be discussed in terms of narrative development. Thomas considers the ideas of expected narrative movement (the "balance between narrative development and spectacular or

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[9] Prasad, M. Madhava. *Ideology of the Hindi Film a Historical Construction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.
[10] Dwyer, Rachel, and Christopher Pinney. *Pleasure and the Nation: The History, Politics, and Consumption of Public Culture in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011
[11] Thomas, R. "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity." *Screen*26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-31. doi:10.1093/screen/26.3-4.116. pg. 120

emotional excess"), modes of address, and verisimilitude in the films of this era, grounding her argument in a discussion of viewing pleasure that, in turn, is grounded in an understanding of Indian culture and norms.[12] Thomas is unique in her argument (and is often cited as such by other scholars) because she does not summarily disqualify these films and purposefully engages with the songs. She presents a way to bring value to songs that are exemplary of the exact type of songs that I chose to *not* look at in this thesis, because to me, they are too spectacular, and represent the shift *away* from the type of songs I look at in this thesis.

Reconceptualising as "interruptions" the interval and song-and-dance sequences, Lalitha Gopalan differentiates the latter into three ways of considering the relation of song and dance to the diegesis: delaying plot development, distracting the viewer through temporal and spatial breaks, and seeing them as being *integral* (not necessarily plot-forwarding) to the film.[13] Gopalan's work perhaps focuses *too* hard on finding a plot-forwarding type of value for the song sequences, and is deeply rooted in the cinephilic and spectatorial pleasures of viewing, presenting the songs as moments to experience different types of visual pleasure (as indicated by the perceived diegetic value to any given sequence). While Gopalan argues that songs can be integral to the films and as such creating different opportunities for visual pleasure, I choose to differentiate this concept of viewing "pleasure" from my "depth of understanding vis-à-vis viewer engagement" argument because I feel that discussions of "visual pleasure" for Eastern products are too

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[12] Thomas pg. 117, 127-29

[13] Gopalan, Lalitha. *Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema*. London: BFI Book Published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. pg. 19

deeply rooted in Western mindsets and colonialist legacies, such that to discuss Indian films in this way feels to me that I am turning them into orientalised, exotified products.

Like Gopalan, Omar Ahmed presents the idea that songs can forward the narrative in his decade-by-decade analysis of Indian films (including *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), *Awaara* (1951), and *Kaghaz Ke Phool* (1959)). He discusses the "narrative function" of songs, going so far as to say that "much of the narrative substance of *Awaara* is carried through…lyrics, dance, and music."[14] Using visual and lyrics analysis, Ahmed addresses how film songs can forward the narrative, but chooses to focus exclusively on world-building spectacle (songs containing singing, dancing, and fantasy elements) and "soundtrack" songs (songs that are not being sung by the characters on screen, and are instead playing in the background).[15] His omission of songs that are sung by the characters is unexpected, as one of the films he looked at (*Kagaz Ke Phool*) has other songs that can be seen as forwarding the narrative just as effectively as the songs he does choose to discuss.

In an extensive study, Ethnomusicologist Anna Morcom makes an argument for discussing songs in their cinematic, narrative, and visual contexts.[16] Aiming to bridge this gap, Morcom argues that the narrative itself determines the musical style of the song, claiming that "songs are as geared stylistically around the narrative as the background

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[14] Ahmed, Omar. *Studying Indian Cinema*. Leighton Buzzard: Auteur Publishing, 2013.pg. 24
[15] Anna Morcom refers to these types of vocals as "backing songs." Morcom, Anna. *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*. Oxford, England: Routledge, 2016. pg. 132. Similarly, Barnouw, writing about *Sujata*, only mentions the songs insofar that they are used mostly as a "background effect." Barnouw, Erik, and Subhramanyam Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film*. Oxford Univ. Press, 1980.
[16] Morcom, pg. 10

score."[17] She argues that the picturisation of the song *belongs to* the song, and as such, the song belongs to the whole narrative. While this 'belonging' is a welcome change, her analysis still does not address the role of the song (and the meanings therein) in the diegesis as a whole.

Presenting a different way to find meanings in songs, Gregory Booth writes about the songs as "music scenes," and highlighting specifically Hindu devotional songs (*bhajans*) across decades, he shows how audience awareness of the religious elements effects their understanding of the true meanings of songs, where in some cases, a song *seems* like it is a religious song, but is actually directed to someone else (other than god). His analysis ranged from a song where a lone character sat and sang a devotional song, seemingly to god but actually to her lover (*Jhanak Jhank Payal Baaje,* 1955), to a full-blown spectacle from *Karan Arjun* (1995) featuring fantastical sets and 40-50 background dancers in carefully choreographed sequences.[18] This juxtaposition works to erase the differences between these two very different songs, further enforcing this idea that all songs are like the spectacles from *Karan Arjun*.

In their introduction to a special issue of *South Asian Popular Culture* highlighting "new and differing perspectives" on Bollywood song and dance, Gehlawat and Dudrah emphasise the importance of separating the term "song" from "dance."[19] For them, this separation allows for a more nuanced understanding of the industry,

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[17] Morcom pg. 137

[18] Booth also addresses the impact that paratextual gossip and the conflation of character and actor can have on audience's processes of making meanings. (Booth 2000)

[19] Gehlawat, Ajay, and Rajinder Dudrah. "The Evolution of Song and Dance in Hindi Cinema." *South Asian Popular Culture* 15, no. 2-3 (2017): 103-08. doi:10.1080/14746689.2017.1407547.

technology, and style of music and dance.[20] While important for industrial analysis and narrative, this distinction, I believe, has been clear since the very origins of Hindi film discourse: "a star, 6 songs, and 3 dances." This separation of dance from song for the purposes of industrial study begs a similar separation for the purposes of narrative study. Ultimately, this means a separation of spectacle songs from the other types of songs present in Hindi films, as the proliferation of discussion on the spectacle lends the casual learner to believe that *all* songs in Hindi films are spectacles, which is not true.

For the purposes of this thesis, spectacle songs can be visually identified as having larger productions with background dancers providing backup vocals while doing choreographed dances as a main character also sings and dances. These songs may come with some sort of fantastical element, taking place outside of the universe of the film, and may include an "Item Girl," a female character introduced solely for the purposes of singing and dancing in a particular song sequence. (While not a widely-used term, the "Item Boy" also exists.) Narratively, these songs will often open the films, serving only a world-building purpose. Additionally, these songs may be built into the narrative, foregrounding them as a planned performance, a trip to the theatre/club, religious festival, etc. Alternately, spectacles also happen with no warning, and with no indication as to why there is a song in that moment.

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[20] Beeman (1981) wrote about the importance of folk and theatre legacies of song and dance in regards to early industry-building through the 1950's. While he is not consistent in this, there are aspects to his analysis that indicate a differentiation between song and dance, and listening and seeing these film songs. Beeman, William O., 'The use of music in popular film East and West' , in Krishen 1981 'Indian popular cinema: myth and metaphor', *India International Centre Quarterly,* 8.1, Special Issue (1981): 77-88

This distinction is critical, because in these early films, each having an average of 8 songs, there are usually only 2–3 spectacles, leaving a majority of the songs in need of categorisation. This rarity of spectacle within a single film, as compared to the excess in attention given to spectacle songs speaks to the dominance of the "cinema of attractions" as an idea that has guided how popular Hindi films have been viewed, feeding into the notion that *all* songs have no value. I am moving away from this idea, and present a way to look at the other songs, the songs that in number dominate these films, such that we can visually, affectively, and qualitatively differentiate not only the songs, but also the films themselves, from spectacle. As a result, we can see how these other songs function as parts of the narrative whole through their engagement with the social codes governing the universe of each film and how they serve as vehicles for character development and audience understanding.

Methodology/Background

In this thesis, I will discuss song sequences from a selection of films that were released in the 1950s. The songs herein are not the oft-discussed spectacles, with the background dancers and the musical-esque quality to them (and are what the scene from *Late Spring* reminded me of). I chose this decade specifically because of this predominance of these uncategorised songs, because as the decades progress, a clear trend emerges in the increasing spectacularity of film songs, making this decade unique in how un-spectacular the remaining songs are. I call these songs "emotive" songs, where songs are moments for characters to express feelings as they are being felt, and are

actively singing the songs (no backing songs). I have classified these songs into three subcategories: absentminded, communicative, and performative, differentiated by how a character will engage with their surrounding space. I will briefly describe each category here, and go into further detail in each respective chapter.

Absentminded songs take place when a character is alone. They are not singing with the intent to be heard, and are not singing to a diegetic audience. These are songs of self-reflection and expression, and the character is singing in a moment of great emotion, where it is almost as though they are singing unconsciously – absentmindedly, even. These songs grow organically from the moment in that they are not asked for directly by any characters in the film. These songs can often function as duets, in that two singers, both alone in two separate spaces, are singing a song at the same time. Taking place with two characters present in the scene, Communicative songs have a conversational quality to them. As with absentminded songs, the two characters will be alone but are singing for and to each other, with the awareness and intent of being heard. Performative songs are those that take place as a character's performance to a group. In the films, the character is sometimes prompted to sing at a social or religious gathering, and while singing amongst a large diegetic audience, the performance therein does not lend itself to spectacle, especially when compared to actual spectacle songs. There may be background singers, but the entertainment value and to-be-looked-at-ness of the spectacle song will not be present. What separates these songs from spectacle songs is the affective function of the song itself, as the character is using this performance to express a specific emotion, a

narrative and affective specificity not required of the spectacle song.[21]

Each of these three categories still encompasses a variety of songs with varying levels of emotional expression and narrative cohesion. Part of what these categories allow us to see is the social codification of performance, where there is a separation of the public and private spaces within the world of the film. This relates to the importance of not categorising all songs as spectacle, because through this categorisation we are able to see the subtle distinctions in the way the films are moving between different modes of performances, kinds of address, audiences, and social spaces. That is, rather than looking just at absentminded songs where the character is alone and expressing some internal feelings, I will be looking at songs where social expectations/structures necessitate that solitude, where that solitude then allows the character to express something they otherwise would not be able to in public. Similarly, the communicative songs discussed here also capitalise on the notion of characters not being able to express something when in public, thus requiring a private moment to do so. Finally, the performative songs present a unique situation in that while the character is performing for the diegetic audience at large, embedded in their performance is a coded message to a specific character, such that the rest of the diegetic audience does not understand what it is the singer is really saying through their performance. By categorising beyond just spectacle and not-spectacle, we are able to see how these songs function affectively and narratively in a way not afforded by the term "spectacle."

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[21] That said, spectacle songs of this time can have metaphorical or indirect affective value, where the meaning of the songs have an emotive quality for the performer or member of the audience, despite the visual nature of it still being spectacular.

As the audience, we are able to see these moments of isolation, moments that, because of the separation of public and private, only a few characters within the film are even conscious of. Conversations will be alluded to in songs, previous songs will be referenced in later ones, and ultimately, our remembrances allow us to perceive a deeper meaning in moments (songs and otherwise) that take place afterwards. We are able to see how in these moments of isolation the characters respond to the social structures present within each film, and how truths that only we are aware of are complicated by and within song sequences. Only by being fully engaged with every element of the narrative are we able to see and appreciate the differences in presentation afforded by the different song types, and the performances therein.[22]

There are several social conventions present in these films, and before introducing the four films and highlighting the main social conventions the characters are made to respond to (in public and private), I will briefly explain how the various social, cultural, religious (Hindu), familial, and romantic conventions function in the public and private spaces. In this context, "private" means being in solitude (absentminded songs), and "public" is the absence of it, where the character knows that they can be seen and/or heard. As a result, the "public" extends further into the home than society at large or the

[22] While Gopalan argues that songs can be integral to the films and as such creating different opportunities for visual pleasure, I choose to differentiate this concept of viewing "pleasure" from my "depth of understanding vis-à-vis viewer engagement" argument for two reasons. First, I feel that discussions of "visual pleasure" for Eastern products are too deeply rooted in Western mindsets and colonialist legacies, such that to discuss Indian films in this way feels to me that I am turning them into orientalized, exotified products. Second, this viewer engagement allows us to better understand the characters, and in asking the viewer to fully engage with the agency given to us in being able to see these moments of isolation, I am only asking that they reframe how they experience the character's emotions in these songs, and am not suggesting that we are doing so with the expectation of any added "viewing pleasure."

social class a character belongs to, and also includes the character's family. An individual character's role and obligations to the family unit feed into how they will behave in front of the larger public. Above all, the family image is to be maintained, and character behaviour will be guided by the desire to uphold its honour, where what is "honourable" is in turn, dictated by Hindu ideals. The "what will people say?" (*log kya kahenge?*) question is a key concern, and characters will aim to avoid giving the "people" any opportunity to say anything.

With the public that exists outside of the home, the conventions of social class and hospitality come into play in these films: despite the distinct differences in visibility between the wealthy and the poor, if the character is of a higher class, they are expected to behave in a decent and appropriate way, as they are being judged by their peers and observed by the lower classes. These interactions with peers often take place at large gatherings hosted by a character's family (performative songs), and behaviour is further nuanced by the expectation to honour the needs of the guests, where in the case of a wedding, the guests are members of the other family. However, even when the family unit is alone, a character's concern for the greater public and for individual family members will continue to dictate their behaviour, such that they will need the escape of being fully alone.

In communicative songs two characters are in solitude, and while still mindful of other people and how their individual actions could affect their families, there are interpersonal, gendered conventions that the female character especially, is responding to. These romantic conventions of courtship, love, and marriage initially present themselves

as the female character's behaviour being fundamentally altered once in love. She is usually coded quite quickly as a "wife," and her treatment of the male character becomes more reverent, a notion guided by religious Hindu ideals. Once in this wifely state (whether publically acknowledged or not), the female character's behaviour in all spaces changes, her role in her own world shaped by the love she has for the male character.

All of these conventions are present in each film in varying degrees of prominence. Each film is guided by one or two very obvious (in that the film makes them central to the plot) conventions, and the rest are implicitly present by virtue of the plot and characters. The films discussed are *Babul* (S. U. Sunny, 1950), *Aah* (Raja Nawathe, 1953), *Amar* (Mehboob Khan, 1954), and *Anari* (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1959).

In *Babul*, translated as "father's home" (in the sense that it is the place a woman leaves behind when she gets married), the chief convention is maintaining the honour of the father. Ashok (Dilip Kumar), an upper middle-class young man, falls in love with Usha (Munawar Sultana), an upper-class girl. Bela (Nargis) is a young girl from the village (i.e. poor) where Ashok is stationed as postmaster, and she is also in love with Ashok. Bela leads Usha to believe that Ashok is also in love with her, and that Usha is getting in the way of Bela and Ashok's love. Saddened by his perceived betrayal, Usha agrees to marry someone else. Meanwhile Bela has a serious accident, and dies shortly after Ashok marries her.

In *Aah*, onomatopoetic for "breath," the dual concerns present are maintaining the honour of the entire family and that of one's love interest. Raj (Raj Kapoor) and Chandra (Vijaylakshmi), both from wealthy families, are intended for each other. But Chandra is

not interested in marrying someone she has never met, and tasks her younger sister Nilu (Nargis) with sending the rejection. Instead, Nilu falls in love with Raj, and he with her. Before he can propose, Raj is diagnosed with Tuberculosis and decides that the best thing to do is to break Nilu's heart such that she will forget him, as he does not want her to know of his illness. His method for heartbreak is to (seemingly) honour the arranged marriage with Chandra. In the end, Nilu and Raj are married anyways, and Raj is on the road to recovery.

In *Amar* ("immortal"), the notion of immortality is dealt with in terms of religious salvation and the socially mandated adherence to upholding family values, such that the decisions made by a single character will forever determine his spiritual and social life. Amar (Dilip Kumar) is a well-to-do attorney who is in love with Anju (Madhubala), an upper-class woman interested in the social welfare of the lower classes. Sonia (Nimmi) is a young woman in the village who has a slight crush on Amar. One night, in a fit of passion Amar rapes Sonia, who perceives this as them being married. The guilt of his action eats away at his engagement to Anju, who ultimately learns the truth and has Amar commit himself to Sonia.

In *Anari* ("fool"), the differences in expectations between the wealthy and poor serve as the backdrop for the love story between the main characters Raj (Raj Kapoor) and Aarti (Nutan). Raj is a very poor man living with his landlady Mrs. D'Sa (Lalitha Pawar). Raj meets Aarti, a wealthy woman who is pretending to be poor, and the two fall in love. Raj eventually finds out that Aarti is actually wealthy, a betrayal doubled when her father is the cause of Mrs. D'Sa's untimely death, but Raj is blamed for it. Ultimately,

Raj is proved innocent, and Aarti gives up her life of wealth to live with him.

Having surveyed a multitude of films from this decade previously and while writing this, I ultimately opted to choose only those films that had all three varieties of emotive songs, a task made difficult by the fact that many films do not have the specific type of performative song looked at here. From these, I selected the four films that allowed for the most variety in directors and dominant conventions while also being representative of the entire decade.

In Indian culture, the theory of the audience's emotional relationship with performance is known as the *rasa* theory*,* based on a treatise on the viewer's response to art written between the 1st century BCE and the 3rd century CE.[23] Rasa theory rests on the foundation of "the commonality of human feelings and emotions," and presents the following components as essential to the audience's ability to experience the realisation of this universality of feeling: "the determinants, the visible effects following the rise of emotion, and the accompanying transitory emotions."[24] Thus, even though we as the audience members do not share in the exact happenings of our characters' lives, we are able to empathise with, or experience, some aspect of their feelings, and (for this study) this is afforded to us by the social conventions present in each film (the determinants), how the characters choose to negotiate social space in response (the visible effects), and the mode and performance of the song itself (the transitory emotions…where "transitory"

[23] Bhatia, Namita (2016). "The 'Rasa' Theory and the Concept of the 'Sublime': A universal Approach of Bharatamuni and Longinus." *Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 21:10:9. Pgs 10-12.
[24] Bhatia pg. 11

speaks to the way the performance through song is altered from other moments in the films).

However, as my readings will show, this ability to understand the characters in this way is something that we have, as the film's audience. Each song type shows how the diegetic audience(s) of the films will not understand the character's feelings. The inherent interpersonal misalignment of absentminded songs precludes their intended audience's ability to understand, and although characters are in communication with one another in communicative songs, there are either things left unspoken, pressures put on the private and public spheres of the characters' lives such that, again, even the person they may be singing to, or with, will not fully understand what they are saying. Finally, if in performative songs, the diegetic audience does not understand the performers feelings, how universal can this feeling be, when we, the extra-diegetic audience, are able to understand perfectly?

Considering this self-conscious awareness we have as the audience, and the shifting nature of the affective lens with which we have to view these different performances, Erving Goffman's work on theatrical presentation as it relates to life serves as perfect framework for the perceived dependence characters have on their social contexts in crafting/actively altering their own performances. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman argues that in every moment, every person is performing a version of themselves that they feel is best for that situation, such that the performance is guided by an awareness of what the performer can and cannot do in front of their audience. This is coupled with the understanding that in doing so, they are also managing

how they are seen by that same audience.[25] Borrowing his idea of the "front" – the impressions that the performer manages through their choice in location and their appearance, demeanour, and behaviour – I argue that in these Hindi film songs, song itself serves as an *affective front*, a performance of self that is determined by the isolated setting and how the character performs their song.[26]

Considering Goffman's assertion that performance is "moulded and modified to fit in the understanding and expectations of the society in which the character resides," I argue that similarly, in these 1950s film songs, the characters are always conscious of there being a specific way they *should* be seen (and are aware of the social stigmas should they be seen as otherwise). This consciousness is something visible to us when we compare the character's varying fronts in any given song to other moments of the film.[27] As a result, there is a specific, recognisable "moral universe" in each film that the characters are responding to. Goffman shows how responsive people are to different situations, and these films show how this responsiveness is manifested through song.

Of course, I am aware that Goffman's treatise is a seventy year-old sociological text, written about the nature of live performances given by actual people, and one could argue that there is something more readily available about this knowledge in these contemporary times such that his observations may seem "obvious," so to speak. In choosing to take his observations out of context and reframing them within film studies, I am using his ideas to better shape the observations of social interactions that have been

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[25] Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre 39 George Square, Edinburgh 8, 1956.
[26] Goffman pg. 13-16
[27] Goffman pg. 22

thus far absent from the criticism on popular Hindi cinema (and Bollywood) in particular. What Goffman's discussion provides is a contradiction to the more two-sided idea that abiding by seemingly rigid social conventions gives answers to struggles, and that struggling against them causes problems. Goffman, in focusing on performance specifically, shows how the constant encounter with protocols, expectations, and the attentions of other people (given and received) exerts a pressure on the individual such that they *suffer* convention. Whereas an arranged marriage can be seen as a "solution" to the problem of who to marry, it is only the beginning of the problems for the characters who each have to endure their own social codifications, a struggle that, in these films, is presented in the self-performance through song.

Finally, as the affective quality of song sequences lies in the performance of emotion by the character/actor, I feel it is necessary to address the particular importance of the believability of the singing in all three categories. By that, I mean the level of commitment the *actor* has to lip-synching, such that it really, truly looks like they are the ones doing the actual singing. This goes beyond just saying the words at the right times — if the playback singer has been asked by the music director to sing something with an emotional crack in their voice, the actor should *act that out*. In moments of vibrato, *alaap*s, or humming, the actor should do more than just hold their mouth open or closed (as some do) and instead put their whole body into the performance such that we believe that *their* vocal chords are vibrating in that way.

Acknowledging this dimension of the performance is essential due to the universal awareness that the actor/character's voice is not their own and that we are

hearing the voice of a separate playback singer. I would further argue that due to the proliferation of live singing in Indian culture, the typical film viewer is acutely aware of good and bad lip-synching when they see it. In his chapter "Improvisation, Action Understanding, and Music Cognition with and without Bodies," Vijay Iyer discusses the importance that "embodiment, performativity, and cultural contexts" play in the production of meaning.[28]As per Iyer, through hearing a voice, we are able to perceive the feelings of the unseen figure, thus creating a sense of "mutual embodiment," where the listener also feels what the singer feels. The embodiment of the original singer's voice into the character is thus dependent on the performance of the actor. As my readings will show, the most significant determinants in what we feel and experience (as through our perception of their feelings) are the facial expressions (as determined by how the actor performs) and the voice of the *character* – an oral transmission of emotion dependent in part on the success of the lip-synching itself. As the audience, our awareness of the playback singer forces us to pay attention to these subtle distinctions in performance, distinctions overlooked when all songs are bundled into a single category.

Ultimately, while I will ground my analysis in an awareness of the social structures and the overall moral universes presented in each film, my objective is to present a new way to understand and value the song sequences in these films through close formal and narrative analysis, such that they can be seen as having an affective and narrative purpose. In doing so, I seek to answer three key questions: what are the

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[28] Iyer, Vijay (2016). 'Improvisation, Action Understanding, and Music Cognition with and without Bodies' in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Vol. 1*. (eds.) George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pg. 86

conventions governing performance; how do the characters negotiate social space; and what does each song type allow us as the audience, to perceive that we would not otherwise, had the song not been performed in that way?

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter I will discuss a selection of the absentminded songs from the four selected films. Looking at songs with one and two singers, I show how these moments are made necessary in order to allow individual characters to emote in a way otherwise unavailable to them when in public, and as such mindful of the social structure they are a part of. While there is no diegetic audience and the character is alone, they are singing to a virtual audience of sorts, and although the song generally goes unheard, it is still intended for someone else. By comparing their behaviour in these songs to other moments in the film, we as the film audience are able to see how their behaviour changes from public to private, and in some cases, how behaviour modified by social conventions in private with the virtual audience differs from behaviour in public with a corporeal, diegetic audience.

In the second chapter, I consider communicative duets and songs with one singer in their narrative and diegetic social contexts. The two characters are alone, a solitude from society that is necessary for the ensuing conversation, but is in turn a known taboo that one or both characters knowingly partake in. For songs with one singer, I argue that the singer and the listener are in separate emotional spaces, and the ensuing "conversation" the song presents is the singer trying to negotiate the underlying tension

that perceived distance entails. In comparison, in duets both characters are already "in synch," so to speak, the expression of these mutual feelings similarly made possible through isolation from the social structures within each film.

In the final chapter, I discuss a specific variety of performative songs: the forced performance. In each song, the character is in some way pressured to sing for the diegetic audience, and in each case there is an underlying message within the lyrics and performance for a specific individual, the love interest.[29] Both characters now in the eyes of the public, the singer is presenting themselves in a way that is mindful of the setting, as is their love interest, who cannot betray the fact that they understand the "real" message in the song. Here, the only parties able to understand the true meaning of the song are the singer, the love interest, and we as the filmic audience, a true meaning only available to us through consideration of previous interactions between the characters over the course of the film.

A Note On Translations

Most of the translations in this thesis are my own. When most popular Hindi films are released, they will have translations for everything but the songs, and in the rare instances where subtitles are provided, more often than not these translations will condense the full phrase into a shorter, more poetic phrase, sometimes changing the line entirely to better suit the idiomatic structure of the subtitled language. In some cases I

[29] In making this distinction I am not trying to make a claim about all films of this time, in regards to the role of the love story almost always present in these films. All four of the films selected have love stories, and performative songs featuring one of that pairing allows for the most productive comparisons category-to-category, as the two lovers will feature in the most songs.

have changed the line entirely from the given subtitle track because I do not agree with the translation, and in others I have expanded the shortened lines to be more literal. For example, for the song "*Jo Main Jaanti*" ("What I Know") from *Aah*, one could translate the line *unke liye mera dil me kitna pyaar hain* as "how much love I have for him" (as the subtitle track does). However, the literal translation of the line would be "how much love I have for him in my heart," and while more wordy, it does allow for non-Hindi speakers to better understand the connections I am drawing between words and action, especially how the character very specifically cups her hands to her heart as she sings the words *mera dil me kitna pyaar hain* (how much love is in my heart "*mera dil"*). For all songs, I have underlined the lyric that is repeated throughout the song as the chorus, instead of rewriting the line on each repetition.

CHAPTER ONE: ABSENTMINDED SONGS

Introduction

Imagine a scenario where a young man living in poverty (let us call him "Raj"), cursed from birth by unfortunate circumstances and forced to turn to a life of crime to survive, falls in love with an extraordinarily wealthy woman (we will call her "Rita") – the ward of an equally wealthy and well-to-do man, a Judge. Raj and Rita fall in love, and still poor, Raj allows Rita to assume that he is of a similar socioeconomic class. Unable to afford an actual gift, Raj steals a necklace to give to Rita at her birthday party, a lavish affair full of Rita's peers – the wealthy elite. The differences in social standing between Raj and Rita are made painfully apparent at this party, as is the fact that Raj stole the necklace (he stole it from the Judge!). Shamed and saddened, and unable to face Rita in this setting, Raj runs from the party and goes to the beach where he had previously spent time with Rita. Walking along the beach, he inhabits spaces haunted by happier memories while reflecting on his ill-fated love for Rita. Raj sings to an unseen Rita, saying that since loving her, he has been laughing and crying. In this moment, only Rita occupies his thoughts, and Raj carves her name into a tree, as if to make her presence tangible. Singing to the carving, he reflects on Rita not knowing his true pain because he chose to stay silent about his past. Meanwhile, we see that Rita *is* there, Raj's unseen audience now only unseen to him. This oceanside reflection takes form as the song "*Hum Tujhse Mohabbat Kar Ke*" ("Since Falling in Love With You), the last song in Raj Kapoor's 1951 hit film *Awaara*. Here, because he cannot say this to Rita directly, Raj finds the solitude necessary for him to fully express how he feels, even if only to an

abstracted representation of Rita.

In this chapter, I will discuss absentminded songs where the solitude is necessitated by the character's inability to fully express their true feelings when in public, or because they are mindful of the social and familial conventions present within their world. Once alone (or believing themselves to be), the character is able to present themselves in a way that contrasts their behaviour at other points in the film, where the presence of the conventions that dictate the character's lives determine how they will behave. These are songs of self-reflection and expression; the singer's intent is not necessarily to be heard by anyone other than himself or herself, and they are unaware of their diegetic audience if they have one. Not specific to any one emotion, the tone of these songs is established by the time and place of the song within the narrative and how the singing character is made to act and react to the behavioural codes enforced by their social universe.

However, absentminded songs can feature two singers, functioning as an affective duet. This occurs when the two singers are in separate physical spaces, far away enough that they cannot hear each other sing and thus unaware that someone else is singing at the same time. These paired songs are unique in that we can see the true presentations of two characters at the same time, allowing us to compare the previous behaviours of both characters in earlier scenes of the film. In these paired absentminded songs, both singers experience similar emotions, sometimes expressing the same truths that cannot be made public. These songs can occur in two ways: as a male/female pairing, usually two separated lovers; or as a female/female pairing, most commonly as two women who love

the same man.

There is a freedom to being alone that is expressed in these songs, as the singer will choose lyrics and emote in a way that would otherwise be impossible had they been singing to a diegetic audience, or even just one other character. The character is not aiming to draw attention to him/herself, and because there is no character-to-character interaction, this leaves each individual character free to ruminate on the levels and contradictions of their own feelings, or how those feelings are performed. These are moments where characters are free to be "themselves" — here a version of themselves that is more truly reflective of feelings that they have otherwise been concealing or performing differently. However, although technically alone, these characters are often continuing to respond to social conventions and the people that embody them in a way that creates the idea of an audience, despite the character's solitude. In the resulting performance the character is giving to themselves, we can see how even the consideration of an audience shapes how someone performs, the lack of the actual audience not changing the fact that the characters are still mindful of them. Thus the affective front of absentminded songs, while freed in part, is still bound by outside, social pressures.

As with Raj and Rita from *Awaara*, in absentminded songs the singing character is sometimes singing *to* the other person, saying now what they cannot actually say when in their presence. Moving chronologically, I will use song examples from *Babul, Aah, Amar,* and *Anari* to show how each character's affective front is increasingly determined by their isolated setting — each film's moral universe bearing down on each character such that the solitude provides for them the freedom to express in ways that directly

contradict their words and actions from earlier in the film. Using two examples from *Aah* I will show how Nilu's use of this expressive mode can change in tone, style, and intent, and can be motivated by different social or personal conventions over the course of the film.

In this first example from *Babul*, Usha (Munawar Sultana) and Bela (Nargis) are both alone in their respective spaces, and singing to Ashok (Dilip Kumar), these negotiations of their relationships with him best representing what has been at stake for each woman throughout the entire film: the preservation of the honour of her father's home.

Babul – "*Kisi Ke Dil Me Rehna Tha*" ("If You Wanted to Stay in Someone Else's Heart")

This song takes place after Ashok's accident, Usha still avoiding all contact with him in deference to her promise to Bela that she would cut Ashok out of her life. Positioning herself as a poor woman of the village, Bela had asked Usha, the "daughter of the man who provides justice for the village", to provide some justice of her own. She tells Usha that Ashok loves her (Bela), and accuses Usha of trying to steal him away, emphasising that, with her wealth and status, Usha can easily marry any good man, and that for Bela, marrying a man like Ashok is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Unable to be near him, Usha prayed for his recovery while Bela carefully tended to his injuries. When he finally comes to, hallucinating, he believes that Bela is Usha, his true love. Returning

to Usha, we see that she is in the same room as when Bela made her promise to stay away, and sitting on the same chaise, she begins to sing.

I've become helpless and my heart is repenting after falling in love / What did you gain from stealing my happiness? / If you wanted to stay in someone else's heart, why did you come into mine? / If you had already created a spectacle of love elsewhere, why did you create one with me? (Usha)

Usha chooses to have this moment in her receiving room, a space already associated with her despair, and wearing a black *chunni* with her hair down, she is decidedly different from the Usha we have seen in earlier scenes.[30] Alone in the space, Usha's feelings towards Ashok, and the words she sings, are still determined by the lie Bela told her - that Ashok was in love with Bela, leading Usha to believe that Ashok led her (Usha) on.

After stealing my heart why did you discard my love? / After giving me help, you turned your eyes away - what have you done? / chorus (Bela)

Bela is also in a familiar place, singing in the grove where she often sang with her friends. Tears streaming down her face, she sings of the assistance he had given her. This "assistance" was Ashok charitably buying jewellery for her wedding, as he knew that her father has concerns about being able to afford to marry Bela off. Being of a lower class and thus unfamiliar with the social codes that dictate Ashok's world, Bela misinterpreted

[30] A *chunni* is the veil scarf that is essential to women's outfits in India. The *chunni* is fabric that can be used to cover one's head when necessary, and otherwise gives a sense of modesty that even clothing with complete coverage does not always provide.

this as him wanting to marry her, and after having now spent these many hours caring for him, she feels doubly betrayed by his confusing her for Usha.

How could I have known that you would strike (with lightning) my desires? / That you would teach my laughing eyes how to cry also? / chorus (Usha)
In love, I used to sing songs of you all the time / But you didn't recognise my heart's voice (Bela) */ chorus* (Bela/Usha)

Still in her room, Usha's reference to lightning strikes is reminiscent of Ashok's reaction to hearing that she was going to marry Vinod – lighting violently striking a nearby tree. Her face now lit more brightly, we can see the glimmer in her eyes as she sings of her "laughing eyes" that have now been brought to tears. For Bela, this space was also where she previously sang another absentminded song, then lamenting the fact that Ashok chooses to spend time with Usha instead of with her. This lamentation is made more poignant because of Ashok's most recent rejection.

When Ashok was unwell, Usha's commitment to staying lovelorn (by not visiting him) speaks to her commitment to her word, and to the underlying commitment to maintaining the status of her father's house. Bela has her own societal pressures, as expressed by her father's anxiety about not having enough wealth to marry her off, because if she stayed unmarried people would talk. Ashok's illness demonstrates how differences in wealth and class determine the commitment to preserving familial honour, differences both daughters are aware of: when ill, the villagers claim ownership over him (because as someone comments, he is a man who helps the poor) and insist on keeping him there and paying for his care - to the point where Bela's father spent the money he

would otherwise have saved for Bela's marriage, a sacrifice (her potentially remaining unmarried forever) that he is willing to make. Usha's father's unwillingness to face the potential future of her not marrying Vinod points to differences in what each class perceives as what they have to lose from this sort of failure – Usha's father sees himself as having more to lose, as people across all social strata will talk, whereas (as implied in the film) perhaps only the poor would not talk about Bela's father.

This solitary moment for Bela was motivated by Ashok's hallucination, the betrayal therein prompting her to express her hurt in this mode. For her, the song is her only way of expressing this sadness, as she cannot speak these words to Ashok directly – not just because of his injury, but because knowing now that he loved Usha all along, it is likely that she has already realised her mistake. However, only through processing her sadness in this was she able to reach the conclusion to tell Usha the truth about Ashok's love. Bela's lie is what spurred Usha's decision to accept Vinod's marriage proposal. Initially furious with Bela, shortly after learning this information Usha tells her father that she will not marry Vinod, a conflict tackled in the final portion of the film.[31]

Usha, Bela, and Ashok were all reacting to the specific patriarchal and social-marriage conventions presented in *Babul* (which translates to "Father's home"). This "what will people say" anxiety is also present in *Aah*, a familial anxiety that serves as a backdrop to the character-specific conventions regarding arranged marriage, the societal pressure for women to always be "respectable," and how being in love necessitates (for

[31] Ashok and Usha have an absentminded duet here, "*Duniya Badal Gayi*" ("The World has Changed"), and shortly afterwards is the performative song "Mera Jeevan Sathi Bichad Gaye" ("I've Been Separated From my Life Partner), discussed in brief in Chapter 3.

Nilu) a sort of isolation from Raj, a quasi-spousal separation that manifests as a kind of modesty such that, in person, she is unable to face him directly. But when alone, she is able to address a version of him more clearly, in a way she could never do otherwise. Looking at two of Nilu's absentminded songs from *Aah*, we can see how Nilu's outward demureness is determined by her perception of Raj's love for her and how she processes that understanding when in song.

Aah – "*Jo Mai Janti Unke Liye Mera Dil Mein Kitna Pyaar*" ("What I Know is How Much Love I Have for Him)

After Raj accepts the arranged marriage proposal with "Chandra" only to have it be rejected by the actual Chandra, Nilu visits Raj to explain her deception to a saddened and confused Raj. Raj very quickly accepts her apology and determines that he will come in two days to ask for hand in marriage. Nilu can barely maintain eye contact with him during this conversation and never uses words to respond to what he says or does. She only speaks to question his health, and Raj assuages her fears, still holding her hands. As the scene transitions into the song, we see Nilu modestly push his hands away.

What I know is how much love I have for him in my heart / Why do I love him so much

Sitting at her vanity, we see Nilu's reflection in the tri-panel mirror as she tries to adorn her hair with a flower before giving up and tying the ribbon into her hair to complete her schoolgirl style look. She turns around in her chair and begins to sing,

singing to the camera in a way that speaks to her giving a performance, but to an unseen audience. She moves her hands from her hair and clasps something near her heart when referring to the love in her heart, and she starts to swing her arms to herself before getting up and spinning across her room. She interrupts her own spin as if afraid someone might see her, this "someone" representing her own acknowledgement that way she is openly expressing here would not be appropriate when seen, as such an expression of feeling would not be acceptable in the eyes of the public.[32] Seeing that the coast is clear, she continues to spin until she sits down at the small set of stairs leading up to the balcony attached to her room. Most every line in the song is a question; she is asking herself and she is asking her imagined audience – a presence that is at first more abstract. Nilu is performing to an audience-at-large that is not there, as if desirous that her actions and feelings be observed by *someone* (Raj).

Why does [the situation] cross the limits even though I think each step through / Why am I living while dying after getting trapped by unknown eyes? / chorus

As if in response to her tripping over the stairs, Nilu begins the next stanza by rubbing her feet as she wonders why the situation (being in love with Raj) came about even though she "thoughtfully measures her steps." When singing this first line, during lyrics explaining how careful she had been, she folds her arms and rests her chin on her had to demonstrate what that thought process looked like, and when singing of crossing boundaries, she first uses her eyes to indicate an imaginary line and coquettishly shakes

[32] That said, the song "Sunte The Naam," discussed in chapter 3, shows how this particular societal restriction can be manipulated through the performative song.

her head, a contrast from the previously faux-studious demeanour. She looks side-to-side with a coy smile at “unknown eyes” and leans back onto the column behind her to signify her “dying.” With the chorus there is a cut to a close-up on her face as she sings almost directly to camera. This is her singing to her audience, rather than her engagement with us as the viewers. With the musical break, she gets up, dancing about the room as she fixes her hair.

I’m always at odds with my tangled hair and I put on eyeliner / If it weren’t for him coming I wouldn’t be dressing up like this / chorus

Singing in a similarly expressive way, Nilu sits again at her vanity and braids the plait she has just taken out, tying the ribbon back in as she explains how the only reason she is taking the extra time and care in getting dressed is because Raj is coming. Before her mention of Raj, she is singing to herself in the mirror and to her audience in the room. When singing about him, she looks away in a way similar to how she behaves when she is actually with him. Once she begins the chorus, she is again singing directly to the camera, to her audience.

Oh this sweet pain, oh this first love / If I had known this would happen, why would I fall into such troubles? / Chorus

After dancing about she falls onto her bed and sings up to the ceiling, her hands behind her head. There is a change in lyric in this stanza: in earlier verses (and the chorus) she mentions Raj in the third person, singing about “him.” Here, she is singing

about her love, about *them*, and we can see how her imagined audience is now Raj. At "if I had known this would happen," she turns on her side and rests her face in her right hand very wonderingly, looking at him as though he were beside the camera. She sits up at the repetition of *is mushkil mein parthi kyun* (why would I fall into such troubles?), her right hand raised to her mouth as she thinks through her own question. Still looking at "Raj" in front of her, she falls back into modesty and averts her gaze from him before spinning about her room one last time before the song ends, and she heads downstairs to wait for the actual Raj.

Divorced of the visuals, the song lyrics make clear that she is singing to someone and asking them why she is behaving this way. This version of Nilu-in-love is altered from what we have seen before in the film.[33] In earlier moments, at the village wedding, and when telling Raj her real name, Nilu is demure, soft-spoken, and rarely makes eye contact. Nilu during the song is different in that when she is looking demure or modest, it is something she is *acting* out, and her character in the song is reminiscent of the more bold Nilu earlier in the film (the one who insists he use the formal conjugation of the word "you" when speaking to her), that boldness replaced with very obvious bashfulness. While singing, she is more spirited in how she comports herself, making direct eye contact with her imagined audience and only playfully looking away.

Raj never arrives to speak to her father, and more than six months go by, each day Nilu waiting for Raj to come. She does not know about the Tuberculosis, and has no

[33] I say "in love" because Nilu becomes a markedly different person once she has fallen in love. This ties into the related issue of the *sati-savitri* propaganda of these early films, where a woman is presented as the "ideal Hindu/Indian wife." But this is an entirely separate matter and not the focus of this study.

understanding of why he has not come yet. Nilu is dying from grief, and Raj is actually dying, his condition worsening day by day.[34] While distressed and sometimes hysterical in front of her family members, she never fully expresses her sadness to them, never even revealing Raj's identity (she herself never saying his name). On the day that Dr. Kailash comes to see her, there is a sense that Nilu would have revealed the truth to her mother before Chandra walked into the room. It is most likely that Chandra's presence moved her back into silence, because (as we learn later) her parents still assume that Chandra and Raj's marriage will come to fruition, and Nilu does not want to complicate the situation by revealing the impropriety inherent in her and Raj's love. In "*Jo Main Jaanti*" her desire to "not complicate" manifests as her hiding her happiness, but in "*Yeh Shaam Ki Tanhaiyan*" she is able to address head-on the cause of her sadness, something is she otherwise unable to discuss with her family because of how it would affect the arranged marriage. Her sadness is devastating to her loved ones, but out of respect for Raj's decision to stay away, Nilu never shifts any blame to him, and only fully expresses her own suffering when alone in song. Perhaps motivated by circumstance, her next song, taking place later that day, can be seen as her acceptance of their distance.

[34] There is another absentminded song here, where Raj and Nilu sing to each other from their respective spaces, both trying to understand how to accept the distance between them.

Aah – "*Yeh Shaam Ki Tanhaiyan*" ("The Loneliness of This Night")

Similar to this lonely night, I am alone with the sadness you have caused / Like a leaf I tremble in the wind / chorus

Standing on her balcony in a patterned *salwar kurta* that, with her *chunni* draped over her, only vaguely differentiates her body from the dark marble columns, Nilu begins her song looking out over the road leading to her house.[35] We see her from below, the camera moving closer and levelling off as she repeats the first line. She looks down dejectedly as she completes the refrain, and there is a cut to a close-up of her face as she begins the second line. Looking down at the road again, she sings of the blowing wind, her expression one of exhausted sadness. She turns away from the balcony and walks back into the room, slowly sinking down to sit on the stairs that lead up to the balcony. Her looking out at the road obviously demonstrates how she is waiting for him to come, but the empty distance confirming for her that Raj will not come. The emptiness of the space, and her lack of engagement with it, is reflective of her having lost the virtual Raj as well, leaving her with no one for her to sing to or and perform for in the space she is in. She is still referring to a "you" in her song, but here she is singing to the absence of Raj.

Even the path you were to come by has started to erode away / You have not come, but many seasons have passed / chorus

In the same room as "*Jo Main Jaanti Hoon*," the space has been recoded to

[35] A *salwar kurta* is an outfit that consists of pants, a long tunic, and a *chunni*.

present a different sort of isolation – the empty spaces no longer house an imagined audience, and are instead pointedly devoid of any presence. The wind continues to blow, a curtain in the foreground fluttering along with her *chunni* in the background. When she begins to sing about the passing seasons, there is cut to a close-up of her face as she looks out at the night sky. Her eyebrows slightly knit together, she closes her eyes and raises her hand to her head as if trying to console herself, her hand moving from her hair to her face as she turns and rises to walk towards her bed.

Holding your memory to my heart I have been crying in the night / Even the moon and stars have cried seeing my state / chorus

She moves from the stairs to her bed, opening a box to take out a bundle of Raj's letters wrapped in ribbon. She buries her face into the letters, themselves a construction of absence, then presses different parts of her face to the bundle, as if to fully embrace his essence. Gently crying, she sings of her crying directly *to* the letters, holding them to her chest and face alternately, the letters now all she has left of him. Looking up at nothing in particular, tears streaming down her anguished face, Nilu sings about the moon and stars before turning to lie down on her bed. She rests her face on the letters, and as the camera tracks away from her, she again melts into the room, the patterning of her blankets, floors, and windows all emphasising how alone she is in the space.

In this song, Nilu has lost Raj as her unseen audience member, something we see from the way she engages with the space and how different this moment of solitude is from the happier moment that took place six months prior. She still has the freedom to express her sorrow, but now it is not *to* anyone in particular, as her desired audience is

gone. Now she sings of being alone while being fully alone, her acceptance of her isolation perhaps foreshadowing his return. As with the previous song, Nilu is in part motivated to stay silent for the sake of her family, and in part out of respect for Raj's decision to stay away from her, her love for him and her family so strong that she honours the secrecy that masks the impropriety of their relationship.

Just as Nilu slowly comes to the conclusion that Raj is not going to come for her and that she has lost him, Anju, in "Jaane Wale Se Mulaqat Na Hone Payi," has to face the fact that Amar has chosen to walk away from their relationship, and is no longer hers. While in *Aah* Nilu has been spatially separated for at least six months, Anju is singing to a man who, for some time now, and in spite of her best efforts, has not been emotionally present despite his continued physical presence. The hurt Anju sings of is not something she is able to express in public, and can no longer express to Amar.

Amar – "*Jaane Wale Se Mulaqat Na Hone Payi*" ("I Wasn't Able to Meet With Him Before He Left")

This song takes place shortly after the performative song "*Na Shikva Hain Koi*" (to be discussed in Chapter 3), where Anju expresses to Amar that she is not upset with him for being married to Sonia, and only wants him to be happy. However, immediately after her performance, her father publicly beseeches her and Amar to set a wedding date, and Anju runs away from the party and hides in her room. Her father goes after her, chiding her for her childish behaviour, where "one moment you are laughing, and the

other, crying." Seeing his daughter's anguish at the notion of marrying Amar soon, he softens, and after telling her not to get upset over "small things," remarks that being a woman of good standing means that in order to pass through life, she will have to suffer and make sacrifices.[36] Anju's father says that he will send Amar upstairs, but Anju tells him not to, as Amar should make the decision to face her on her own.

Amar does initially come up to her door, the two of them able to see each other through the misted glass. Changing his mind whilst holding the letter he wrote for her, he walks down the stairs and out of the house, Anju desperately following him down the stairs, stopping at the landing. In an extreme close up, Anju's shocked expression change to one of acceptance - the acceptance of the fact that Amar was not going to explain anything to her. Tears streaming down her face, she begins to sing

I wasn't able to meet with him before he left / The words I needed to say couldn't be spoken, so they stayed in my heart / chorus
She couldn't shine, as he has turned his face away[37] / The night she had dreamt of couldn't happen / chorus

We see that Amar hears her song and pauses for a moment, but continues on his way out of the house (Anju does not see this). Leaning her head against a pillar, she sings of the unspoken words before turning her face towards the column to weep. In the

[36] There is something about his tone throughout this conversation that speaks to a devaluing of that which Anju, and other women like her, value. Perhaps it is just is condescending word choice in this scene, but there seems to be an assumption here that women get upset over small things to the point where they react to them as though they are much larger issues. His perception of the "small thing" she is upset by is challenged when she starts to sing, he seemingly moved enough such that when Amar leaves, there is never moment where he seems upset about it, thus allowing Amar's exit from her life to be fairly clean, the final conclusion happening on her terms in the *mandir* (temple).

[37] Technically, she is saying "chandni" and "chaand," the feminine and masculine terms for the moon.

musical break between verses, we see that her father is also able to hear her. He has been moved to tears by her sadness, and perhaps thinks more of her pain now than before. Still leaning against the pillar, Anju begins the next verse looking down before turning her head to the side to look out in Amar's direction, tears gently streaming down her face as she sings.[38] In the last line, when singing of the night she dreamt of, she is referring to the marriage, and their felicity, as a whole. Anju understands that in walking away from her in this moment, Amar is also walking away from their relationship. She runs across the hall to the balcony outside, catching him before he makes it off the property. He pauses again and pockets the letter. Standing at the balcony and watching him walk away, she begins to sing again.

A storm rises in my heart, yet the words still couldn't come out / the sky is overcast, but the rains couldn't come

Here, she sings of the contradictory nature of her feelings — there is so much to be said, but she is unable to have the words come out. Up until this point, her lyrics implied that their inability to communicate was because Amar had walked away. Now, it seems as though she is saying that this is also a contradiction she feels in herself. For the storm clouds to be there without the subsequent rains speaks to her own inability to fully express what she wants to —despite the fact that she is clearly finding the words to sing

[38] This song is perhaps the only time I would entertain a discussion of audience pleasure, in that Madhubala's performance of this grief is so gorgeously tragic that it is impossible not to appreciate it (the way one would appreciate a painting or work of art…still not the exotified, Western approach to visual pleasure in Indian cinema…at least that is not my intent). When singing of the moon not being able to shine, Anju turns her head to look out, and the visual irony of her beautiful, perfectly lit face shining like the moon is impossible not to marvel at. And the tears! Like small pearls rolling down her face.

this song. But this inability to say what she wants is not in contradiction with the perceived freedom of expression that absentminded songs allow – her isolation is forced upon her, and her inability to choose her own solitude makes it impossible to say what she would have, especially since the conversation she needs to have requires that Amar be there.[39] The song serves as an immediate reaction to the betrayal of him leaving, and the confirmation his action implies, Anju ripping off her engagement ring and letting it fall to the ground.[40]

Throughout the film, and especially here, the most striking aspect of Anju's character is the understanding that we as the audience are given that (in this moral universe), the onus to express sadness and remorse is consistently put upon *her*, even though Amar is the one actually at fault. This is never more apparent than in her song sequences, and this presentation of self in her songs is reflective of the religious codification of the expectations for how women of means and status are meant to behave.

Deeply religious, the first time Anju sees Amar after finding out that they have been arranged was in a *mandir*, where Amar takes his own Om (ॐ) necklace and puts it around her neck, a gesture paralleling a groom putting the *mangalsutra* on the bride during the wedding ceremony.[41] The cultural conventions at play in the film present the

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[39] Amar has no songs in this film, the closest thing being a voiced-over, highly expressionist moment where he mulls over telling Anju the truth. Even here, she is the one begging him to let her help him..

[40] It is my opinion that the filmmakers were unwilling to cut away from Anju too much while she was singing, so there are some temporal issues in this sequence. In the scene immediately following, we see Amar walk past a hidden Sonia, who runs towards the house to see Anju. Amar is walking past Sonia while Anju is singing her final verse, and there was never a moment where she was singing her song and aware that he could hear her.

[41] The *mangalsutra* is a marriage necklace that serves as the wedding ring-equivalent amongst most Hindus.

inherent expectation that women like Anju (wives) will not only see their own husbands as god (a term for husband being *pati-parmeshwar*, meaning "husband-god"), but they will also sacrifice themselves for what is best – "best" as determined by the exterior, overarching social codes that overshadow them. In *Amar*, these conventions are representative of the internalised ideal of *sati-savitri*, where the ideal wife is one who will sacrifice anything and everything for her husband, including herself.[42] In "*Jaane Wale*," Anju sings about how her ability to thrive (shine) was in part dependent on him, but by allowing him to leave because that is what *he* wants, she is reframing his leaving *her* as her losing *him*, this demonstrating her adherence to the idea that *she should* be suffering, a burden she feels she should bear on her own.

Whereas in *Amar,* Anju's adherence to cultural conventions manifests such that songs are representations of the restrictions she is put under, for Aarti (in *Anari*), songs serve as mode of escape from the ideals of her wealth and social class, and the behaviours those social conventions require her to have.[43] Pretending to be poor, she takes advantage

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[42] In *Amar*, these larger conventions ensure the need for the sanctity of "marriage" and the preservation of the family, i.e. Sonia's child not being born to a publicly-unwed mother | Sati was the Lord Shiva's first consort, who self immolated after her father insulted her husband. Savitri followed the god of death after her husband died, and successfully negotiated his return to life.

[43] One can also argue that how much a character is *seen* can help justify certain song choices as absentminded. While I do not directly address this song here, the song "Kisi Ki Muskorahat" (Someone's smile) from *Anari* (1959) presents itself as a tricky song to categorize. Here, Raj Kapoor's character Raj is skipping down the streets singing to himself about his recent interaction with Asha. He dances and skips, and even interacts directly with other people on the streets. Despite this, I would argue that his status as a poor man overlooked by society helps render him as being 'alone' in moments where he is not strictly speaking, alone. The emotional quality of the song as a moment of self-reflection not always meant for the eyes of the world maintains the absentminded status, despite the somewhat-spectacular element to the song (in the vein of "Awaara Hoon" from *Awaara,* or "Mera Joota Hain Japani" from *Shree 420*).

of the freedom of expression that affords her, her rebellion giving her the chance to be herself. As such, her songs provide her the opportunity to be true to herself in a way she cannot otherwise, a true expression only allowed when she separates herself from the gaze of the people who best embody the social conventions she is beholden to.

Anari – "*Tera Jaana Dil Ke Armano Ka Lut Jaana*" ("Your Leaving is Like the Loss of My Hopes")

After apologising to Raj for lying, Aarti promises that she would do or sacrifice anything for him, even it that means going against her uncle. When she returns home, her uncle tries to explain to her the dangers of her actions, citing a story about a rich girl who married a poor boy, their love quickly devolving into the "hatred the rich have for the poor and the poor have for the rich," because the boy was not able to provide the right kind of life for the girl. He accuses her of playing a game with Raj's heart, not believing her when she insists that she could be happy in poverty. Seeing that she is still unconvinced, he threatens to "ruin" Raj if she continues with the relationship. The next day, Raj comes to Aarti's house to see her, but Aarti turns him away, telling him that her love had been a game the whole time, pointing out that he will not be able to provide the kind of life she needs. She tells him that it would be best to think of her as dead, and he leaves, but not before admonishing her for her close-mindedness. Moved by his harsh words, Aarti starts to play the piano and sing.

Your leaving is like the loss of my hopes / Like someone seeing their good fate wiped away

Turning her head to look in the direction of the stairs, Aarti sings to the now-gone Raj. After repeating the first line she turns back to look across the piano, and with the second line, an extended *koi dekhe* (someone seeing), she closes her eyes and allows her tears to fall – tears she had, for the most part, kept at bay when speaking to Raj. Singing of the good fate being erased, she raises her left eyebrow slightly, almost quizzically, a gesture matched by a momentary amusement in her eyes – an ironic amusement – that seems to express that even though she put herself in this situation, it does not mean it hurts any less. As she repeats "your leaving," she turns to look past the camera, her gaze again following Raj's path.

Your sadness and happiness is mine also / My life flowed from you / Laughing, we said we would be together forever / This was only yesterday / chorus

Looking at her through the decorative window bars, Aarti gets up from the piano and moves towards the window, the camera moving down until she is perfectly framed within a diamond-like shape in the centre of the screen. From here, she can see Raj walk away from the house, and from her. Her words demonstrate how like-minded she and Raj actually are in terms of their romantic ideals, despite what she said to him in their earlier conversation. In a previous song ("*Dil Ki Nazar*") Raj says to Aarti that everything of his is now hers — a sentiment repeated here. As for their conversation about being together forever, that was *actually* yesterday, the quick turnaround feeding into Raj's hurt, a hurt

that Aarti also experienced when delivering the blow.

Every time the moon will rise it will remind me of you / It will keep me awake all night / I will be left crying anytime my heart protests / Who will be able to reason with my heart?/ chorus

During the musical break we see Raj grimly walking away, his perceived sadness parallel to what Aarti is expressing. Interestingly, at the beginning of the next verse we see that Asha has been in the room the whole time. She was there in the background while Aarti and Raj were speaking, and apparently did not leave when he left. Asha's job is to be there for Aarti, and despite Aarti's assertion that Asha is a friend, and not a servant, Asha's true status in the household is constantly reasserted every time we see her. Asha blends into the walls; her often-nondescript clothing and simple hair style all obvious hallmarks of her class Raj somehow does not see. In this song, Asha's status as a poor servant lends her the very same invisibility that Aarti previously craved and took advantage of.

Slowly making her way down the stairs Aarti begins this verse with a large circular window visually reminiscent of the moon beside her, a window she is avoiding. The moon serves as a motif throughout their relationship, the two songs they share earlier in the film each emphasising its beauty. Singing in the future tense, she implies that the moon, and their love, will continue to torment her. This is a torment that she will never be able to give into, as her maintaining this distance is what will save Raj from her uncle's wrath. Slowly turning to look at the window-as-moon and what it signifies, she asks, "who will be able to reason with my heart?" with the question "if not you?" an implicit

follow-up. She walks all the way down (Asha following close behind) and sits at the dining table with her head resting on her arms, Asha comforting her at the very end.

In the film, we are first introduced to Aarti as a young woman who is running away from her etiquette classes, classes where refined, wealthy women are trained to walk and laugh in the "appropriate" ways. Already in defiance of what this class required of her, she more readily adopted the identity of a poor woman in order to facilitate her escape, convincing Raj to help her run. By virtue of her relationship with Asha, Aarti was able to successfully pretend to be poor, and through her time with Raj she experiences the differences in behavioural expectations between the poor and the wealthy. She already knows how the poor are seen by the wealthy (as determined by her dialogues when pretending to be Asha), but with him, she is able to live that life, so to speak, and through that experience realise how freely she is able to express herself. However, while in earlier moments Aarti is using song (and the guise of poverty) to freely express herself, in "*Tera Jaana*," because she spent the scene just prior performing an exaggerated, untrue version of herself that leaned on her being wealthy, her freedom to express in the song is a different kind of escape from those same conventions. Here, this sense of freedom is such that she does not need to escape into poverty to adequately express herself – in fact, she cannot escape into that other life here.

While this isolation still takes place within her home, a space belonging wealthy class, the escape in this song is from the performance she had to put on when rejecting Raj, and to do so Aarti utilises the space in two ways: to mask the difficulties she had in playing a more 'villainous' self, and to fully underline the differences between her and

Raj. Aarti keeps her back to Raj throughout the entire conversation in order to hide her tears, her voice cracking numerous times, and uses her piano as emphasise the "diamonds, pearls, and materialistic comforts" that she pretends to require in life.

Conclusion

Absentminded songs, as modes of expression, necessitate a solitude that allows the character to express themselves in that moment, in a way that would otherwise be impossible when in public, or otherwise not alone. The various familial, social, religious, or cultural conventions enforced upon, or internalised by, the characters work to require of them a certain type of behaviour. These behavioural codes, and their associated social spaces, are negotiated by individual characters through their absentminded song(s) in a way that affects the front they put up in these isolated moments.

In some cases, the affective front of these songs presents a version of the self the character *has* to be, and in others the song allows a version of the self they *want* to be. In order to express absentmindedly, the character needs to be alone, or believe themselves to be, a solitude necessary for them to address the individual they cannot communicate with in person, this mode of expression allowing them to express the desire to have had *this* conversation with that person. As a result, these kinds of absentminded songs often present with a nuanced understanding of the audience, where the isolated character will be conversing with someone who we know is not there. This communication can be as simple as singing *to* the unseen person as if speaking to them, or, as we saw best in *Aah*, the singer can virtualise their unseen, inaccessible desired audience, singing to them in a

way that speaks to their presence actually being there. These songs function similarly as duets, where either both singers are singing to their respective, desired listener who could be the same person (as in *Babul*), or both singers are singing to each other.

Even when conversational, absentminded songs serve as moments of self-reflection, these reflective moments building towards some sort of emotional or narrative happening. In *Babul*, Bela being able to say what she needed to Ashok determined her decision to tell Usha the truth. In *Aah* this understanding (as per her performance) that Nilu has that Raj is not coming back, and is no longer a presence (physical or virtual) in her life, feeds into the emotional arc leading to a later song (discussed in Chapter 3). Anju's song in *Amar* was a presentation of self as determined by her own religious and romantic codes, her unresolved despair and heartbreak directly resulting in her conversation with Sonia. As for *Anari*, Aarti's Uncle threatened to "ruin" Raj if she did not cut Raj out of her life, and Aarti's song serves not only as a reaction to her earlier performance, but also as the necessary emotional "low" such that when her uncle ultimately does work to ruin Raj, Aarti immediately went to help Raj.

CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNICATIVE SONGS

Introduction

In Raj Kapoor's *Barsaat* (1949), Gopal (Prem Nath) and Pran (Raj Kapoor) are two "foreigners" spending their holidays in a Kashmiri village. Gopal is a womanizer, leaving a woman behind in each village they pass through, including Neela (Nimmi), a young woman who is hopelessly in love with him. Pran believes in the sanctity of love and falls in love with Reshma (Nargis) a young woman from the village. While both men, by virtue of being foreigners, are looked at with suspicion by the villagers, each coupling has its own set of codes that determines how and why each member presents himself or herself as they do in song. For Pran and Reshma, Pran believes in the power of love, and that once in love, one should devote their whole life to that person. Reshma does not yet know what it means to be love, but Raj, already in love with her, is trying to teach her the poetry of love. Reshma is, however, aware of the presence of her nearby family, including her overbearing father who has recently gone away to secure a marriage proposal — a proposal she is expected to accept without question — and knowing full well that her father would never choose a foreigner like Pran. Even though not physically present, Reshma's awareness of her father is enough that in order to see Pran, she always goes to his house across the river. However, even that distance is not enough to be free from social and familial expectations, and the two have to row even farther away, to different secluded spots where no one can see them and there is nothing to remind them of where they *should* be, or who they should and should not be with.

Here, lying on the ground with her head on Pran's lap, Reshma sings "someone has been anchored into my eyes, what can I do? " and sings of the beauty of the stars. As she sings the first line, she looks up and smiles, before looking purposefully away as she asks, "what can I do?" As she finishes this first line, she looks up expectantly at Pran, who is looking down at her in awe. Reshma smiles in response to his silence, which in turn, makes him smile. Through her song, Reshma expresses to Raj that she has finally understood what it means to be in love, this realisation moving him to tears.

Had Raj and Reshma stayed closer to home, this level of emotional connection would not have been possible, as her awareness of what home means would overshadow the possibility of any other realisation. As with absentminded songs, in communicative songs the character's need for solitude is determined by the social conventions that govern their world, a key difference being that because these two characters are *together*, a further isolation becomes necessary, from society as a whole and from the individual structures that best represent the social conventions at play. This mutual solitude is then found in a place outside of the realm of their social structures, rather than in just a place where they are, or can be, alone despite proximity to said structures (i.e. the difference between a character singing upstairs in her bedroom when her family is downstairs, as with Nilu in *Aah*, and characters singing outside, in a park separate from the family home where the representative structures reside, as with Raj and Aarti in *Anari*, to be discussed in this chapter).

Communicative songs will either feature one character singing to the other, or both characters singing to each other, as determined by the state of their relationship,

which is further determined by how they, individually or as a unit, are made to respond using the same affective front of communicative songs to the social conventions present in the film. When there is only one singer, it is because the two characters are in different emotional spaces – that is, the singer is often trying to make their love interest understand where they are emotionally. In duets, both singers are already in the same emotional space and are expressing to each other as such. In both cases, the characters will often reference previous conversations (songs included) and will be using this communicative song to negotiate whatever tension exists between them, tension that exists as a side effect of the social codes they are forced to live by.

During these songs, the characters are free to say and do that which they would not do in front of *other* people. Whereas in absentminded songs, the character is presenting themselves in a specific way allowed by the absence of *all* people, including the person they are likely to share duets with, and where the character's behaviour in song towards their unseen audience is dissimilar to how they are when actually with their intended audience, in communicative songs, the two characters behave in the song as they do when alone together in other non-singing moments of the film. In this way, communicative songs function more as conversations the two are having in private.

For the audience, communicative songs allow us to connect previous moments the two characters shared, connections that manifest in lyrics and gestures. In these comparisons we see how the two characters are when alone (absentminded songs), alone together (in song and not), and ultimately (as discussed in the next chapter) how the characters behave when together, but in the eyes of the social structure at large that is

otherwise determining their actions and necessitates the isolation of absentminded and communicative songs.

In *Babul*, the consideration of how their lives would affect the overall perception of their fathers' names is the overarching social issue in the film for Usha and Bela. However, how Usha behaves in public is further delineated because she is of a higher status, and as such serves as a model for society within the film. Usha falls in love with Ashok, who, as the child of her father's beloved friend, is made a member of the family. For Usha and Ashok, this presents as an excuse for them to spend time together, in private, in a seemingly socially acceptable way.

Babul – "*Milte Hi Aankhen*" ("As Soon as the Eyes Met")

Usha and Ashok's story begins with a meet-cute, and subsequent misunderstandings, and after Ashok sings a flirtatious song in front of her friends and family, Usha's father suggests that he come regularly to teach Usha how to sing.[44] "*Milte Hi Aankhe*" is the first lesson, sanctioned by the social order in a way that lessens the perceived impropriety of two unmarried people being alone in Usha's bedroom. Here, Ashok sings at the piano while Usha repeats his lines, facing him as she leans against the piano.

[44] This song ("Husn Walo Ko Na Do Dil") will be discussed in the next chapter.

As soon as the eyes met the heart fell for another / my story became their story

Earlier, Usha tells Ashok how ever since hearing him sing at her birthday, there has been a "storm" in her heart, a storm that makes her wish she could steal his song or become a part of it entirely. This forwardness in expressing her attraction to him matches her comparatively emboldened demeanour in earlier scenes, a verbal forwardness that is matched in part by Ashok telling her that she "is trying to sing from [her lips], and not from the heart," and that in order to sing, there "has to be a desire born in the heart." So, despite their physical closeness and overall flirtatious tone, it is not until he begins singing the chorus that he confirms the idea that maybe he too, has a "storm" in his heart. As they begin the song, Usha seems a little nervous, her hands not comfortably at rest – until she hears him say that his story has become [her] story.

Do not ask me the effect of love / in just a moment someone became so attracted to another (like a moth to a flame) / chorus
Whilst laughing I pray I won't begin to cry / [I pray that] someone's glass not spill as soon as it is filled / chorus

Singing sometimes in the first person and sometimes in third, the two seem to flirt with the notion that they are the "someones" mentioned in Ashok's lyrics. The line expressing the suddenness of their attraction refers to the opening trajectory of their relationship, and they maintain direct eye-contact throughout the entire song, exchanging small smiles and mischievous looks throughout, presenting themselves in song the same way they do in other scenes when alone together. This indirect mode of address is found throughout the film and gives the sense that even if someone in the film were to be sitting

there watching this unfold, they would not necessarily doubt the innocence of the moment – this is just two people singing about *other people* who are in love – almost as if the awareness of familial and social obligations is enough to never directly express their romantic desires.[45] Instead, the setting itself speaks to the cupid-esque, Romeo & Juliet – Laila-Majnu feel as the camera tracks across the various paintings and statues that adorn Usha's room.[46]

Despite their reserved behaviour and the freedom that being alone in this space gave them, we later find out that Usha's father was making Ashok a part of the family in the form of a *son*, not *son-in-law*, making their behaviour in this "sanctioned" solitude actually completely inappropriate. This balance of propriety and impropriety in solitude is pushed further in *Aah*, where in "Jaane Na Nazar" Raj and Nilu's awareness of social and romantic conventions and expectations is complicated by the fact that both characters are (separately) naked, and as such have to be additionally mindful of what the consequences would be if they were seen in this moment, rather than just in the eyes of society.

Aah – "*Jaane Na Nazar*" ("I Don't Know the Gaze")

Unaware that they are each the object of the other's affections, Raj and Nilu's first in-person encounter ends with them both soaking wet and forced to weather out a

[45] Because Usha is at most, 16 years old in this film, it is easier to believe that she was not fully aware of her complete lack of agency in regards to marriage, an awareness that *should have* resulted in her behaviour with Ashok being more guarded than it is.
[46] This imagery and the lines about hoping they will never cry foreshadow the tragic ending of the film, our two lovers (both still alive) unable to be together.

storm overnight, but with only one room available to them. Separated by a window, Nilu is wrapped in only a blanket by the fire, and Raj is similarly undressed, resting in an oil barrel and using his jacket as a cover.

I don't know the gaze, but recognize the heart / Who has cast themselves onto my heart? My whole body is smiling (N) | *It is always torturing me (R)*[47]

Here, they both sing of not knowing what the object of their love looks like, but recognising the feeling of that love. This is a reference to the conversation they had earlier in this scene (still in their separate spaces), where Raj teases her for the "blind love" she has for her mystery man. They share with each other the fact that they both are in love in their own ways, Raj with his dreams and Nilu with her mystery correspondent. Raj asks Nilu if they had ever met before, and she says "maybe in your dreams." Of course, we understand the irony of this exchange, but they do not.

Whose voice is it that teases my heart and then disappears?
Who is it that has fused into me such that I get shy when I hear their voice?(N)/chorus (R)
I look for [her] in the stars, and in the cold outdoors of the spring / But I am no less than anyone else, why have you hidden yourself from me? (R) / chorus (N)

When singing about the voice that teases her, Nilu adjusts her blanket slightly to fully cover herself, a gesture that seems to be more out of habit than anything else – she does not know that Raj can see her, and even when he does look at her, it is not so much to see her as to recognise her, in that he feels the same way about his love. He confirms this in the following verse, where as though to continue Nilu's thought, he sings of

[47] I have marked each line/stanza with (R)-Raj or (N)-Nilu to indicate who is singing what. The last line of the chorus changes depending on who sings it.

looking for the entity that she described as having disappeared. While Raj is singing of the entity, he is still singing for an existing audience, and when asking why "you" have hidden "yourself" away, Raj looks at Nilu, but is not necessarily addressing himself to her – that is, the question of why [she] is hiding herself is not something he is asking Nilu specifically, and is instead his mystery love.

The beginning of the song an almost absentminded quality to it, and aside from the fact that both are aware of and singing to a diegetic audience (of one), the way each character is singing to their surrounding space is markedly different from absentminded songs. As discussed previously, in *Aah* there is often a sense of a virtual presence that the solitary characters are singing to, an affective dynamic that is present in the film not only across song categories, but even outside of the songs: the films presents overarching theme of letter-writing, the act of writing already a for of address to an imagined presence. In "*Jaane Na Nazar*", that other entity takes on a more illustrative, almost educational quality, as though the singer is referencing it for the sake of their actual listener.[48] Nilu and Raj are not singing *to* each other necessarily, but are *with* each other, singing about *other* people (whom we know are in fact them).

The impropriety (in the eyes of society) of their being unmarried and alone is enough to merit being in separate spaces, but made more necessary by the additional factors of it being night-time, cold, and nobody having clothes to wear. Moving beyond society at large, there is an interpersonal social dynamic at play here also – a romantic social understanding that not only is it not appropriate for them to see each other naked

[48] This should be reminiscent of how in "*Woh Chaand Khila*" (*Anari*) Aarti was often singing to the object of her song, the moon, in her attempt to have Raj see it in the same way.

because they are not in a relationship, even if they *were*, there is an expected sense of modesty on her part that would still, on a personal level, necessitate some sort of separation from him. Nilu's behaviour in this song is a more abstracted representation of the reverence and respect she has for Raj, the man she loves as a husband. From her perspective, nobody can really see her, but she still chooses to cover herself in their (unseen) presence.

Anju similarly demonstrates a marital love for Ashok prior to actually being married, her religiosity and his Om necklace feeding into her behaving as the *sati-savitri* ideal. Adhering to this makes her behaviour even more self-sacrificing than Nilu's, who is at least able to publically display some level of the emotions she reserves for solitary moments, something Anju cannot do. In "*Jaane Na Nazar*," although separated and otherwise unaware of whom they singing to, Nilu and Raj are in similar (if not the *same*) emotional space, their affective fronts complimenting each other. In "*Tere Sadqe Balam*," Anju is trying to re-establish that same parity for her and Amar. Here, Anju and Amar are on vacation, distanced not only from society, but also from Sonia, and the guilt she makes Amar feel.

Amar – "*Tere Sadqe Balam*" ("I Will Sacrifice Everything for You")

Before he raped Sonia, Amar and Anju were in love and preparing to get married — the planned arranged marriage cheerfully becoming a planned love marriage. Previously feeling that he could not live without Anju, the woman who embodies the

dreams he had for his future, Amar is now consumed by his own guilt and shame, and is pulling away from her. In a beautiful setting, Anju sees Amar sitting alone in thought, and running down to him, begins to sing.

I will sacrifice everything for you, do not be sad / Where and when else will we find this place?
The days are beautiful, who knows if the Spring will come again / Swallow your sadness, and live for but a moment / Don't concern yourself with the rest of the world / chorus

Anju lovingly puts her arms around Amar's shoulders as she sings, and once she has his attention, she tries to have him see the locale the way she does. We see her run joyously down the path, invigorated with a new liveliness in demeanour and dress that we have not seen from her since Amar started to pull away (after the rape). From the way she looks at the sky and back down to him, it is clear that she is finding a beauty and sense of enjoyment in this place that he is not cognisant of. She sings the second verse while they both ride on horseback, Amar staring straight ahead while Anju seems to take in everything around her. Her asking him to "swallow his sadness" is repetition of their earlier conversation where she asks him to try and forget that which haunts him. When he says he cannot, she says that she is becoming "weak from his silence, and would die to make him smile again," illustrating the more *sati*-like understanding of self that she has (versus saying that she "would do anything for him"). While we know what it is that Amar cannot forget, Anju does not, and in the song, her determined attempts to find joy in this place and make him see it too is her way of expressing that sense of undying devotion that her willingness to "die for him" implies. She points out that time is never guaranteed, but all this seems to fall on deaf ears.

Don't get stuck in the thorns, my love / live laughingly in the flowers
There is happiness and there is laughter / But thousands of sadnesses in life / chorus

Moving forward in time, we see that they are walking in a park inhabited by other visiting guests. Amar, still distracted, walks into a patch of thorns and Anju runs to free him from it. Visually, this is reminiscent of an earlier moment where Anju tries to touch Amar's feet to show her devotion, Amar walking away before she can. Anju stays low to the ground after freeing Amar and continues to sing to him as he walks away from her. She dancingly skips to him to catch up while singing about the "thousands of sadnesses," her physical joy illustrative of her own decision to focus on the happiness and laughter.

New meetings and the lively air are calling to you / Come whilst singing, come whilst laughing, to the other bank of the river of life / chorus

Another day, and now on a *shikaar* (a Kashimri river boat), Anju uses the surrounding water to try to return Amar to her present. Sitting in a boat where he cannot walk away from her, Amar perhaps has no other choice but to maintain eye contact and really listen to her as she once again tells him to embrace life, as if to say that if they *can* be happy, then they should be happy. Expressing that she is the other side, almost as soon as she finishes singing, Amar gives her the engagement ring, telling her that he is worried he will lose her investment in him otherwise.

Throughout this song Anju shows how devoted she is to Ashok, her love for him like that of a wife. She repeatedly reminds him that she will sacrifice everything for him, this repetition not just within the song but also of events from their previous conversation. Specifically, Anju trying to touch Amar's feet is a profoundly significant

moment, especially as two *unmarried* people, where technically there is no obligation for such an act.[49] The significance of this is not lost on Amar, who in walking away dealt an even deeper blow to Anju in rejecting her reverence. Of course, he rejects this because he does not feel worthy, a worth lost because he raped Sonia.

The bizarreness of two unmarried people travelling together unaccompanied notwithstanding (in that this very thing is something that society would generally look down on, and would otherwise be impossible without a chaperone, regardless of class), another code that factors into this moment is their being isolated from society at large (thus allowing for them to be travelling unwed, with Anju often embracing him). In this new place Amar is isolated from another force that is making it impossible for him to be with Anju: Sonia. In the conversation they had before "*Tere Sadqe Balam*" Amar describes the night "he saw his own ruin" (alluding to this ruin as a feminine entity), such that we see that he is referring to Sonia — and her "venomous gaze" — from the night of the rape. Anju can only hear his words, and in this abstract context believes that Amar is unwell. This earlier conversation takes place in Amar's home, where he is unable to face Anju because of the constant reminder of Sonia, not only in that the rape occurred there, but also because Sonia is a member of the larger community that Amar and Anju are a part of and that Anju takes pride in championing.

For Anju, the cultural conventions present in *Amar* manifest as prescriptions and prohibitions for her presentation of self in public and private, to the point where her own

[49] Traditionally, touching someone's feet and then bringing your hands to your head implies that you respect that person so much that you consider yourself to be at the same level as the dust on their feet, and this gesture takes on a more worshipful context in marriage.

understanding of her love for Amar imparts behavioural guidelines for her to follow. Her direct address with him in this song was more forward and joyful than before because they were away from society, her actions also underscoring her own understanding of the ideal wife. In "*Woh Chaand Khila*" Aarti uses her poverty façade for the first time as an escape into expressive freedom not afforded to her by the strict standards she is expected to follow as a member of the social elite. Singing to Raj, she tries to get him to see the world as she does, a difference in sight that ultimately speaks to the actual wealth gap between them.

Anari – "*Woh Chaand Khila*" ("The Moon Glows")

As per the initial reactions the wealthy had to Raj, including Aarti's uncle, it is clear that in the eyes of their social order, Raj and Aarti are not meant to fall in love. It would not be appropriate, and while both are aware of this perceived boundary between the wealthy and the poor, only Aarti is actively crossing it, as Raj believes her to be of his class.[50] Previously, when Raj came over to Aarti's house, her uncle was not there, and they were more easily able to spend time together in her house. In the sequence leading to this song however, Raj and her uncle are both in the house at the same time, the house no longer a safe space, and she whisks him away to a nearby park, away from the eyes of her uncle.

[50] However, it is safe to say that Aarti's initial intention was not to fall in love with him – she too treated him in a condescending manner, her own performance as a poor girl similarly disdainful in its perceived accuracy. Raj's moral structure is what attracted him to her, his socializing presence changing her in turn.

Once at the park, it quickly becomes clear that Raj does not understand why Aarti wanted to meet privately. She talks about how beautiful the night is, he makes a comment about the temperature; she points out the beauty of the moon, he classifies it; she gives him a flower and talks about putting it in her hair, he offers it back to her. Overall, he does not see the world or this place in the way she does, and for her, that contributes to his not understand why she wanted this moment together. In her annoyance, she calls him an *anari*.[51]

The moon is smiling, the stars are laughing, the night is filled with ecstasy
Those who can understand have understood, those who can't are fools

Although Raj quickly realizes his mistake with the flower, Aarti uses the stage-like park space to teach him how to see the night the way she does. Singing to the moon, she turns to face him when referring to "those who can understand," and as if to indicate his full awareness of *his* own status, Raj sings the line "those who can't are fools," perfectly in rhythm with Aarti.

Look, the silvery path [of the moon's life] dancingly beckons you / In the embrace of moonbeams, waves of passion dance / The strings of my heart are playing, the outdoors are singing, love has emerged in my life / chorus

The moonbeams [have covered their face] with a chunni, who are [they] in love with?
The Queen of Night *flowers are crazy over the look of the Moon*
The starry trap has taken away my heart; don't ask me its state. / chorus

While her words are directed at Raj, Aarti focuses on the moon when singing of

[51] *Anari* essentially means "fool." In the context of this song, it is more along the lines of "buffoon" or perhaps "loveable idiot."

it, the close-ups on her face showing us her fascination and how the moon's reflections off the water onto her face seem to inspire the "waves of passion" lyrics. Like the *Queen of Night* flower, Aarti only has eyes for the moon, looking to Raj again only to tell him not to ask after the state of her heart. Paralleling this, throughout the entire song Raj only has eyes for Aarti, a gaze returned in her final iteration of the chorus. As though to signify their coming together, puts the flower in her hair, and Aarti calling him an *anari* nonetheless.

Aarti's overall demeanor in this song, and her fascination with the moon and the beauty of the world, is reflective of two things: first, her escape into poverty has in fact successfully allowed her to express in a way previously unavailable to her — she prances about, dances, and laughs — all things she is presumably taught not to do in her etiquette classes. Second, her ability to see the beauty of the world and to admire the moons speaks to the luxury of life afforded to her by her own social status. Out of necessity, Raj experiences the world more practically. He understands being cold and the importance of applicable education but does not understand subtle romantic gestures or poetry. These are accomplishments his life does not require him to have, and in this moment, her focus on these works to enhance the distance between them. It is almost as though when calling him a "fool," what she is really calling him is "poor."

In their next song together this poor/wealthy separation is confused further. As Aarti is still pretending to be poor, the freedom of expression seen previously still stands, and they are both afforded the same isolation from her social structures. But, the song is a duet, and Raj is also in that isolated, emotive space. Raj is already poor and is not

pretending to be anyone else, yet he is also using this song with Aarti as an escape — an escape into the world she sees, one that is beautiful and poetic and something he could never have seen until meeting her.

Anari – "*Dil Ki Nazar Se*" ("Between the Heart and Eyes")

After a near-miss where Raj almost discovers the Aarti/Asha mixing, we open on a different day, Raj practicing his declaration of love for Aarti with a large rock. Preparing to declare his love, Aarti beats him to it by beginning to tell him how time becomes unbearable when they are not together.

What goes on between the heart and the eyes? / What is this feeling, what is this secret, someone tell me (Raj) */ Rising from our hearts to our lips, what is this song, what is this* raag*, someone tell me* (Aarti)

Raj tries to tell her how he feels by trying to hold her, but she pulls away from his grasp each time. He starts to sing, and after the first line, with her back to him, she joins in by commenting on this (shared) feeling by singing a new line. However, it is not until after she has sung her first line that she can comfortably be held in place by Raj, his singing a signal that he is capable of entering into the affective front of this mode of expression, thus making the physical interaction more acceptable for her, personally.

Why am I being pulled away without my knowledge / What are these bonds tying me down / Something is happening, something is being received / chorus (A)
Have I gotten lost, is this the moon or some enchanter? / Or, is it the effect of your intoxicating eyes? / Everything that is mine is now yours / chorus (R)

What kinds of expressions/gestures are in the sky (A) / What are the stars seeing that make them so happy today? (R) / Why did you, oh stranger, settle into my heart (A) / chorus (AR)

Aarti's next verse is sung as the two of them sit in a canoe, perhaps providing the physical parallel for Aarti's feelings of being pulled away yet held down. For the latter half of the song, the two return to the same park we saw earlier, and Raj's ability to sing of the beauty of the moon and the joyous stars is reflective of his change, as he has gone from not even seeing their beauty and having to be told of it, to being able to sing about them in a way that mirrors Aarti's earlier and current poetic view of her surroundings.

Although Aarti inherently knows how her uncle feels about Raj – his assumed disapproval of the relationship lies "not in the man, but in the poverty itself" – she insists on continuing with the relationship. Even Asha does not approve and wants Aarti to end it before it is too late. However, Aarti believes that with a poor man, she will have a more loving marriage, as compared to marrying a millionaire who will spend "all his time chasing money." Despite her confidence in this assertion, she still hides the relationship from her Uncle, spending an entire afternoon with Raj over the course of the song, her escape into a freedom of expression becoming ever more an escape away from a life of "oppression."

Conclusion

The existence of the familial, social, cultural, and religious conventions that serve as the universal codes in these films does not change from category to category. What does change is *how* these codes govern changes of the affective front, and what spaces the performance can take place in. In communicative duets, while the two characters are

perhaps on the same page emotionally, they need not both be reacting to the same social codes. In *Babul,* Usha and Ashok both interpreted the situations allowing their time spent alone in the same way, whereas in *Aah*, Nilu and Raj were singing to each other without even realising it, each performing to an idea of a person they believe they have not met yet. And in *Anari*, Aarti's escape is Raj's reality, their love being what seems to eliminate that disparity when together in song.

When only one character is singing it is because there is some sort of tension between the singer and their love interest such that mutual communication is not possible. In *Amar*, Amar's guilt is making it impossible for him to communicate with Anju, but she, not knowing the gravity of the crime, innocently and joyfully tries to get him to see the world she is seeing, a transference of sight that is mirrored in *Anari*, where instead of guilt, it is the differences in lifestyle as determined by social class that results in Raj not seeing the world Aarti is trying to show.

As with absentminded songs, the conversations (one sided or otherwise) enabled by communicative songs result in situations or character changes that, without these songs (and the negotiation of social space that they allow), would not have happened otherwise. In *Babul*, Usha and Ashok mutually misinterpreted their social space such that they fell in love with the freedom of believing that was okay, when in fact they were not supposed to. The song itself foreshadows this end, the imagery of famous, failed love stories speaking to what the end of their own story will be. In *Aah,* because both Raj and Nilu were considering the indecency of their interaction through the lenses of society, and personal, romantic relationships, such that they stayed apart from each other but

comfortably expressed the love they have for *other people* aka their letter-writers, this song ended up being the moment they fell in love with each other. In that isolated space, Anju successfully convinces Amar to join her "across the river of life," such that he confirms their engagement, a commitment to her that in that space could have survived, but as soon as they returned to their homes, and to where Sonia was, this commitment served as means to their end, Anju having to bear through tremendous sadness before Ashok is able to leave her. *Anari* continues to be more abstract in its connections, these songs serving as the moments they fell in love, moments referenced later in songs like "*Tera Jaana*" (as discussed in the previous chapter), and "*Sab Kuch Seekha Humne*," (discussed in Chapter 3).

CHAPTER THREE: PERFORMATIVE SONGS

Introduction

Having loved and lost, Ashok and Usha's journey in *Babul* ends at her wedding. Usha is upstairs, her unsmiling face in stark contrast to the smiles that surround her. Downstairs, the groom's family gently teases Ashok on his good looks and asks him to sing a love song, even if it is in "a sad *raag*." When the groom also asks, Ashok agrees and begins to sing "Mera Jeevan Sathi Bichad Gaya." *Jeevan saathi* means "life partner," but *bichad gaya* is a more complicated term. The full contextual definition is "I have unwillingly experienced an unexpected separation from my life partner," and in singing this, in five words Ashok makes his entire story known – a story only Usha can understand. Ashok sings of this separation as marking the end of his story, giving no indication of what will come next for him, because he feels that there is nothing. In his song he mentions the springtime places we saw him and Usha frequent in earlier songs and sings of how two lovers are unable to meet, their love songs now replaced by the "lessons of fate." Throughout this, Ashok stands separately from the others, leaning against a column looking up to where Usha is. Still surrounded by her friends, Usha's eyes well as she listens to the song, eventually forced to leave them and hide in her bedroom, a space that once was home to her and Ashok's first love song.

Two factors played into Ashok having to sing: the wedding is in his uncle's house and therefore, in *his* house, and the groom, the most honoured individual there, asked him to sing. Ashok has no choice, and is forced to sing in front of a diegetic audience

consisting of wedding guests and the *ladkewale* (the groom's side).[52] Having this song be a forced performance allows for two things: as this is a wedding, a musical number is expected by both audiences, and thus satisfies that requirement; and it gives us an opportunity to see how these two characters tackle this separation that their social conventions have inflicted upon them, in the presence of the people who best represent those structures. As this is Usha's wedding, he never addresses her by name in the song, and alludes to her in a way that only she is able to understand, an understanding that only we are able to see. To address her by name would be to reveal that she is in love with another man, a dishonour that Ashok cannot bring upon her or her father. However, Ashok is not the only one performing here. Usha has to keep her emotions in check for as long as she is able and is only free to express her anguish at his words when she is alone and out of sight of the friends and family members who cannot know of her love for Ashok. Through these two performances we see how earlier moments from their love story are referenced in this tragic setting, and the song allows us to see his follow-through on the earlier promise that, on the day of her wedding, he will do everything he has to with a smile on his face.

Forced performances like this one are the subject of this chapter, where a character is made to sing, against their will, in the presence of the physical embodiments of the social structures and conventions that guide their world. In absentminded and communicative songs, we see how the characters, in choosing to isolate themselves, negotiate the internalisation of these conventions and the assumed feedback from the

[52] The *ladkiwale* (girl's side) are always subservient in their treatment of the *ladkewale*.

people who best represent them. In these performative songs the characters are faced with having to express themselves in front of the physical manifestation of the societal conventions their behaviours are bound by. Through performative songs – accepted forms of public expression – characters are able to express the feelings that cannot or should not be expressed in these social contexts, and although each individual is able to relate this moment to previous moments shared and lived, only we can see the full picture of both characters' stories. Additionally, we are able to compare our own perceptions, as the film's audience, to those of the diegetic audience. Because we have seen previous interactions the characters have had, we are able to take the songs at more than just "face value," as the diegetic audience seems to. To them, the song is entertainment, and they cannot understand what is really going on in between the two characters (in some cases because they have no reason to believe that there is any connection between them at all).

Performative songs take place at a time when there is some sort of tension in the relationship that has not been negotiated in private between the two characters, either because the tension is newly introduced or because circumstances are such that the required solitude or other means of communication are not available to them. This issue of time and space requires that the character address the tension through a veiled, public communication.

The two characters ("singer" and "love interest," respectively) are both performing in two different ways. First, the singer is sending a specific, targeted message to their love interest while still performing for the diegetic audience-at-large; this limitation necessitating that the communication happen in the abstract. Second, the love

interest has to act as though they do not hear that other message and instead hear the song the way the rest of the audience in the scene does. There is a delicate balance in these performances, such that too much of any emotion, or too obvious a gesture or phrase, could provide the necessary imbalance to enable the diegetic audience to understand what is actually happening in the song. This need for balance speaks to Goffman's discussion of the performance and the role of those tangential to it:

> When we allow that the individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him. Ordinarily we find that the definitions of the situation projected by the several different participants are sufficiently attuned to one another so that open contradiction will not occur.[53]

In these films, "open contradiction" would be the acknowledgment of the socially forbidden nature of the characters' relationship, and the negation of the mutually accepted understanding that the right thing to do (in that situation) is to not acknowledge the truth in any direct way. For the earlier example, while Usha was visibly, slightly upset in the presence of her friends, it was not until she was alone that she allowed herself to fully express her own sadness. Had she cried and made known the impact the song had on her, the resulting questions would potentially reveal the illicit relationship, the consequences of which would extend to the entities she and Ashok are protecting in following through with the marriage.

This chapter will explore the ways the characters in performative songs from *Babul, Amar, Aah,* and *Anari* alter their performances of songs in the presence of their

[53] Goffman pg. 3

social structures, while still isolating themselves, and their love interest, from those structures through a mutual understanding that only they have, and only we can see. Beginning with two songs from *Babul* and *Aah*, ("*Husn Walo*" and "*Sunte The Naam*," respectively), I show how songs that have a more flirtatious and fun tension underlying them are able to engage with societal conventions in a different way. I will conclude with three songs from *Aah* ("*Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat*"), *Amar* ("*Na Shikva Hain Koi*"), and *Anari* ("*Hum Hain Anari*"), that work to address more significant tensions between the characters, with different stakes at play in the negotiation of social space.

Functioning as the song-equivalent of the meet-cute in both films, these songs from *Babul* and *Aah* allow the characters to engage with their love interest in a more targeted way, a direct level of attention made permissible by differences in situation and audience.

Babul – "*Husnwalo Ko Na Dil Do*" ("Don't Give Your Heart to Beautiful People")

Having already accused him of damaging her mail, when Usha sees Ashok at her birthday party their early banter (initiated by her) was about him breaking more things. That he had no desire to associate with her was made clear by his response, but once they realise each other's identities, the tone changes, and sitting together, the flirting begins. They separate once Usha's father comes into frame with Vinod, Ashok and Usha conscious that they should not be alone in conversation for too long, especially not when there are parents and other guests for Usha to be mindful of. Asked by party guests to

sing a song, Usha stops her own performance by feigning a cough, trying to cover up for the mistakes she was making while she was playing — mistakes she is only making because Ashok is teasing her, first by staring at her and later by reacting very viscerally to her incorrect notes. Vinod jokingly suggests that Ashok sing, and although initially refusing, he says yes only because his uncle also tells him to sing.

Don't give beautiful people your heart, they will erase it from existence /
They'll create an ill feeling in you for the rest of your life

As Ashok begins to play, we see how impressed the surrounding audience members, including Usha and her father, are at his unexpected skill. As he begins singing, his gaze moves across many of his onlookers until settling on Usha, leaning over his harmonium slightly to gesture to her. Chagrined, she makes faces at him, her embarrassment at the situation exacerbated as he ends this first riff by gesturing to her with his hands to fully indicate that she is the "beautiful person" that he is singing about.[54]

They often treat those suffering from the pain of being in love /
But give the kind of medicine that will increase your pain
You can't depend on the love these people claim to feel /
First they take your heart, and then (from their heart) forget about it
It's been an age since they have given their heart to a lover /
People say they betray lovers' hearts.

[54] As this film does not always follow popular camera conventions, it is difficult to say for sure, but when Ashok looks off to his left, it seems as though he is looking at Vinod, including him in the joke about Usha before Ashok looks back at Usha. This could explain the suspicious looks Vinod gives, as he may already know that his and Usha's parents are considering arranging them, making him wary of this interaction with Ashok.

Throughout the rest of the song Ashok continues to make obvious overtures to Usha, her expressions changing from embarrassed annoyance, to *"oh really?,"* to a gentle acceptance of her being the subject and an appreciation for his singing. The diegetic audience can see how he is directing this song to her, but masked as a performance, this forwardness is not inappropriate, Usha's father even looking amused at the situation. Ashok treating this song as a performance increases the romantic tension between him and Usha, as not only is he flirting by singing very pointed lyrics about the dangers of loving beautiful women *to* Usha, but he is doing so with the approval of all of those around him, his manner of singing keeping the song in the realm of acceptable performance. This perceived acceptability is because of the people who asked for and approve of his singing, and that because it is Usha's birthday, specifically addressing her is all the more acceptable, as she is meant to be the centre of attention. Precisely because of this performance, Usha's father asks Ashok to teach his daughter how to sing and to come by everyday for tea. This elevates Ashok from the status of family-friend and guest to someone who is welcomed into the home regularly. Although Ashok is already of the same social status as Usha or Vinod, the familial connection now established by Usha's father allows for the future interactions that Ashok and Usha will have. We later find out that what this performance provided for him backfired, his closeness to the family necessitating that he be present and accommodating at Usha's wedding to another man.

Ashok was able to hide his flirting within his performance, a significant feat considering that the most significant social structures and considerations in this world are present: Usha's father, the family home, guests/society at large, and Vinod. In "Sunte The

Naam" (*Aah*), Chandra's performance is governed by different social conventions unique to that moment, such that rather than veiling from her audience the identity of the abstractedly-referenced love interest through her performance, the objective instead seems to be hiding the intensity of her message to him.

Aah – "*Sunte The Naam Hum*" ("I Had Heard the Name")

Shortly after Raj realises that he needs to more effectively ruin Nilu's impression of him, he appears at a cocktail party Dr. Kailash throws. Before his arrival, we see that Chandra is repeatedly asked to sing by the attendees, Chandra consistently declining. Finally it is announced that she is going to sing, despite her refusals. At the same time Chandra finally spots Raj, asking her friends who the man with the "princely" look is – quite opposite to her earlier conceptions of how he would look. Earlier in the film we see how Chandra struggled to write a letter to Raj, her indifference for his love of the outdoors making it impossible for her to express any interest in him, especially when she had no perception of what he looks like, and who he is as a person. At the party, it was only after realising that Raj is the man from the letters that Chandra decides to sing. She strides confidently to the piano at the far end of the room, the camera following her as she spins the end of her black *chunni*, a movement seen earlier that is a part of her teasing demeanour. Chandra spins dramatically to lean against the piano, her eyes fixated on Raj, and begins to sing.

I heard a lot about you from the Outdoors / When I saw you my heart danced with happiness
That person who hid from my gaze, my heart says it is you / Your eyes gave colour to my hopes, and my heart dances with happiness / chorus
Why am I smitten with the man I had already refused? / Once my love tormented me with this love, my heart danced with happiness / chorus

Throughout this performance it is clear that Chandra is aiming to draw attention to herself. For the diegetic audience - the friends asking her to sing - she is perhaps showing off, making a show of the fact that she chose to acquiesce and sing. For Raj, she is showing *herself* off, making it clear (to him) how she feels about him. As such, she is being watched by everyone in the room but still looks directly at him as she sings the first verse. She maintains eye contact with Raj for most of the performance, only her dancing between verses sometimes interrupting her stare. She acknowledges the previous letters in her phrasing of "the outdoors" telling her about him, referencing Raj's expressed love for the outdoors, and her disinterest in writing the response (and later flat-out refusal of the proposal). Unknown to Chandra, delegating the task to Nilu is what allowed Nilu and Raj to fall in love. Not knowing the consequences of it, Chandra seems to be saying that she regrets this earlier decision and has in this brief moment already fallen for Raj.

Never before has my heart bent / I don't know what has happened now / Don't leave me now, my heart dances with happiness.

Raj moves around her and the piano, taking a seat at the bench as he begins to play the piano to accompany her. He was previously standing slightly away from the rest of the audience, this pointed engagement with Chandra as she sings speaking to his understanding of her coded message. Raj's decision to simply play the piano shows his

mindfulness of the fact that they are both being watched, as the transformation of the song into a duet would test the appropriateness of the situation because then both of them would be openly expressing a seemingly shared feeling in a time and place that cannot allow it. This is because such an outward display of emotional attraction, when it is the parents' role to arrange marriage, would be inappropriate. Additionally, only listening spares him from having to express any feelings of love towards Chandra, feelings he does not have.

Now both the centre of attention, Chandra still keeps her eyes on him, turning her back to the audience for the remainder of the song. Despite her fixation on Raj, at this point it is unclear if *everyone* listening is aware that he is the "someone" whose name she had heard before. The only other character who seems to understand what is really happening is Dr. Kailash, a close friend to both Raj and Chandra. Like us, Dr. Kailash is aware of Raj's illness and love for Nilu, and as such is more invested in Raj and Chandra, seeing them in a way that the rest of the partygoers do not see. Perhaps because we know that Dr. Kailash is in the audience, Chandra's very obvious staring comes with the anxiety of our being aware that her performance to Raj lacks discretion, her message getting closer and closer to the surface with each verse.

Even though someone outside of the singer/love interest pairing was able to realise the truth of this song, Chandra's performance still managed to conceal a level of feeling that could not be expressed in public, despite her singing a song about falling in love with a man she has only just seen. Her dramatic leaning on the piano as she sings of her previous refusals is suddenly followed by her acting shy when wondering why she is

so abruptly taken by him. She seems to modestly fidget with her *chunni* as she lowers her gaze, only to shyly look up to meet his once again. Her confident demeanour established throughout the film and earlier in this scene supports the reading that this is just a performance of modesty or shyness. This version of her is very different from who we see in other scenes. However, in the way she looks away and back when singing of the "torment of love," her longing eyes hardening into intense awareness as she sings, it becomes clear to us how seriously she means her words. If she were to have delivered the entire song with that intensity, it would have become *too* obvious how she felt about him, and would alienate the diegetic audience.

In both of these songs the perceived tension between the two characters is *not* fraught with an inner turmoil that is affecting them both negatively. This is largely due to the fact that these songs take place early on in each relationship, before the consequences of abiding (or not abiding) by the social conventions present begin to take their toll. In the remaining songs, there is an unspoken tension that has developed between the characters, and they are no longer in a place in their relationship where a communicative or absentminded song would be possible or appropriate. The tension then has to be negotiated as a performative song, whereas it is the singer is being forced to sing. Because they are both being forced to be present, this results in more nuanced performances from the characters, where the emotions they are concealing are contrary to the emotional tone of the song's setting.

First, I will discuss the song "Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat" from *Aah*, the follow-up to "Sunte The Naam Hum," where although the audience for the song is only family

members (versus family and society) the familiar conventions and burdens are so great that even a similarly casual setting can become a social space that is barely negotiable.

Aah – "*Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat*" ("The King's *Baraat* Will Come)[55]

Raj comes over for dinner the next evening, and when first meeting Nilu, he cruelly says to her "it seems that I've seen you before." Chandra jokingly says that maybe he saw Nilu in a dream, a repetition of the same dialogue Raj and Nilu had prior to the communicative song "Jaane Ne Nazar." The importance of the eyes/look (*nazar*) is also discussed, and Raj and Nilu even sit next to each other during dinner. Because Raj and Chandra are both willing to move forward with the arranged marriage, Chandra's family is already treating Raj as a son-in-law, thus forcing Nilu to interact with Raj as her *jija* (older sister's husband), adding another layer to the social conventions already present.[56] After dinner Nilu is teased for being so emotional, emotion that is interpreted as sadness regarding the impending loss of Chandra to her in-laws. She is asked to sing a song to mark the occasion, and only says yes after Raj says that she will not, his comment inflicting enough hurt to move her to sing.

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[55] The *baraat* is the groom's processional, traditionally the groom on the horse flanked by his entire family, and their guests, making their way to the wedding at the bride's house.

[56] The *jija-sali* (wife's younger sister) relationship is initially complicated territory to navigate. As the *sali*, the *jija* should be like an older brother, but he still represents the family your sister has married *into* (thus having her belong to another family…a separate but related issue). The *jija* is then to be respected as an older brother, as a *jija*, and as a representative of the *ladkewale*, but at the same time, there is an equal expectation that the *jija-sali* relationship develop into something that more like an actual sibling-relationship (within reason). To have Nilu play this role with the man she loves is a terribly huge ask, and understandably difficult.

The King's baraat *will come, the night will be colourful / I will dance merrily*

Sitting on the armrest of her mother's chair, Nilu sings a slow, mournful-yet-hopeful tune. Her decision to indirectly refer to Raj as the *raja* is significant: it was mentioned earlier that Nilu has not yet told anyone the identity of her missing lover (Raj), Chandra specifically saying that Nilu will not say his name out loud. This inability to say Raj's name out loud is twofold — in doing so she would reveal his identity, something she previously would not do and now cannot, and given the strength of her love for him, she most likely is not able to say his name in the way most wives of the time would never say their husband's name. This is because to do so would be seen as disrespectful, perhaps due to the *pati-parmeshwar* rhetoric that feeds into the respect for the husband's home and family. As soon as he hears the lyrics Raj looks down, for a moment unable to play the role he designed specifically to break Nilu's heart.

The King will get his tilak*, the Queen her* sindoor[57] */ I will also fulfil my heart's desire to get married someday / Joined by her friends, the bride's hands will be coloured by henna / chorus*

Because she is performing, Nilu is able address Raj directly in a way that may otherwise be impermissible. Still crying and unable to smile, Nilu looks directly at Raj while she sings of her desire to be married someday, a look that we are able to understand in a way that (except for Dr. Kailash) no one else present can. When singing of the henna, she puts on a smile, and maintains it through the chorus.

[57] The *tilak* is the way the third eye is marked upon a man's forehead, a longer line rather than a dot, as it is for women.

With the Queen in a palanquin, the King will take her away to a foreign place / Whenever I will think of [them] my heart will hurt bitterly[58] */ I will weep and the night will be dark, [and] I will dance alone / chorus*

Rising from the armrest in a fluid spinning action, we see her face fall into anguish for the briefest moment, but by the time she has completed the turn such that she can be seen again, she again has a smile on her face. She walks over to stand behind her sister, also allowing her to look directly at Raj. In this verse, the words say that she will miss her sister terribly, but we know that she is referring to Raj. Her direct eye contact with Raj makes this clear to him also, her anguished address to him seen as an ode to her sister by those around them.

In making the entire song about a *raja*, but actually Raj, Nilu essentially allegorises what a performative song means. Her performance is that of an emotional younger sister who is overjoyed for her older sister, and layered on that is the fact that the implied subject of her song is explicitly someone other than just a metaphorical king. Raj understands this double-meaning, but may not necessarily understand the true significance of this indirect directness. As this performance was motivated by Raj's antagonistic behaviour, Nilu's deftness in this performance demonstrates how she has, in this moment, overcome her inability to directly address Raj. In previous songs we saw how Nilu was unable to do so when in person, always looking away and minimising words said. Only in her absentminded songs was she able to speak to him directly, but

[58] Like Spanish, Hindi has formal and informal versions of "you" and "they." Nilu is saying that she will be thinking of "them" and the sentence structure is such that there is no clear masculine or feminine definition of who that "they" is.

now she is using that same directness to deliver this message, a directness that leads to her confronting him at the dam the next day.

The "what will people say?" (*log kya kahenge?*) social anxiety is quite prominent in *Aah*, Nilu's father even saying the phrase directly earlier in the film. Nilu's behaviour in this song is dictated by social, familial, and personal considerations: she has to be mindful of what the world would say about her family and sister, is love-bound to care about what the world would say about Raj, and she does not want to be the reason her family suffers, especially not her older sister. Nilu is heartbroken and still in love, and in delivering this message to Raj as she does, it seems as though their secret is safe with her.[59] Nilu runs off after finishing the song, her family moved by her love for her sister. Raj is also affected, and abruptly states that he needs to leave, perhaps indicating that he also needs a break from the charade (charade that to him, we must remember, is well intentioned).

Both songs from *Aah* have had a very specific type of audience - either one of friends and social equals, or one where the audience is small grouping of family members. Like the opening example from *Babul*, in "*Na Shikva Hain Koi*" (*Amar*) Anju is forced to perform in front of a large gathering of people, largely consisting of her father's guests (i.e. the people he is expected to invite), and as such these are people who have only a tangential connection to Anju. The existing social expectations are

[59] Personally, I feel that had Raj not exacerbated the situation by having Nilu come with them to the dam, Nilu and Chandra would never have fought and Raj and Chandra would have gotten married. Obviously, Raj is dying and it is not his intent to marry either of them, but Nilu's adherence to the social codes is strong enough such that in theory, she would have *actually* merrily danced at their wedding, had it happened.

complicated by the fact that she and Amar are already engaged, and in this public display for their social class, they *have* to be happy (and not tearing at the seams as they are). This friction has made it impossible for them to successfully communicate in any other way (including absentminded or communicative songs), leaving Anju no choice but to use this forced moment to force a dialogue of her own.

Amar – "*Na Shikva Hain Koi*" ("I Have No Complaints")

It is important to note Anju's emotional journey on the day of the performance.[60] The day began with Anju, in a delirious sort of joy, declaring that Amar's return to health marked the beginning of her new life. Speaking to no one in particular, Anju wishes to sing and dance to share her joy with the world and hear them congratulate her on her happiness, all the while her voice cracking with emotion as she spins about, almost as though she cannot believe this beautiful turn of fate. Deeply spiritual, Anju insists that the two of them go to the temple that same day to make an offering. Anju's faith and love is as powerful for Amar as it is for god, and his inability to face god, seen by her as his refusal to go with her to see the idol, adds another dimension to their growing distance. Anju continues alone, and there sees Sonia praying with Amar's handkerchief tied in her hair, making it clear to Anju that Amar is the mystery husband. In the span of a single day she goes from joyously believing that she will not have to live a life where she will never be happy to suddenly knowing that she will never actually have that happiness with

[60] This song takes place after "Tere Sadqe Balam" (discussed in the previous chapter), their engagement, and Sonia's announcement that she is already married.

Amar.

Whisked away to the piano sitting on a raised platform, and backed by a large, ornate mirror that gives her a view of the crowd behind her, Anju hesitates before singing, looking to the distant Amar for some sort of acknowledgement. When he refuses to turn and look at her, instead walking away to a different part of the room, she turns back to the piano, her lost expression changing to a small smile as she begins to sing.[61] This smile is Anju steeling herself and reminding herself of her obligations such that she needs to present a smiling face for everyone to see.

I have no complaints / I pray that you stay safe
The paths of love are hard to navigate / walk with care, the times are unfavourable / chorus

Singing out to the mirror (but not seeing Amar), Anju sings these opening lines with the same smile on her face. For the next verse, within each sentence are moments when she looks like she is in pain before catching herself and returning to smiling. Her ability to hold the smile is perhaps helped by the fact that she cannot see Amar, but as he listens to her song he walks into her field of vision.

There is a strange spectacle at your mehfil[62] *where in some places there is light, and others are dark / The fate of the* diyas[63] *have been switched, some have been put out, some still burn / chorus*

[61] To me, this implies that the song could have been a very different performance had he looked at her to reaffirm some element of their connection.
[62] *Mehfil*, as a term, is associated with the Mughal/Arabic aesthetic of performances in court, where the objective is to entertain/be entertained.
[63] A *diya* is a small, clay oil-lamp traditionally associated with religious holidays or ceremonies.

As he is still behind her, Anju looks at Amar over her shoulder as she sings the next verse. Anju smilingly sings of the strange spectacle, her expression changing as she reproaches Amar for his implied part in the creation of that spectacle. With how the audience is scattered across the room, people can see her looking at him, and her smiling while making eye contact with him is necessary for maintaining the outward presentation of marital felicity. As she turns away from him to repeat the line, the sadness associated with the perceived darkness seems to take over, and she has to quickly collect herself, forcing a smile. Amar begins to walk away, this time seemingly like he was planning on leaving the party. Seeing this, Anju begins the concluding verse, and he stops.

Congratulations to you, on the world of your love, don't be sad for my life / these revolutions are dear to fate, it's not my fault, and it's not your fault / I have no complaints

Thus far, Amar has not been able to tell Anju of his guilt, and explain why he is drifting away from he. Anju believes she knows the reason for their separation now, and although in her previous song she was trying to convey to that she is there for him, in singing these words she is trying to convey the fact that she understands now, and he need not worry for her.[64] She smiles for the first line, it fading into a more dejected expression. However, when she sings of it not being *his* fault, while she is saying that the decisions made out of love are meant to be blameless, it is clear in the way she begins to cry and turn away from him and the audience that she does not actually believe that he is

[64] Of course, she does not actually understand, as only Amar is fully aware of the fact that he *raped* Sonia – thus influencing her perception of what his "fault" is. Anju likely believes that the relationship between him and Sonia was more consensual.

blameless. Now that she knows that he is Sonia's "husband," she also knows the active part he played in ruining their (his and Anju's) happiness.

From her performance we can see how conscious Anju is of the fact that she can be seen as well as heard. She turns away from Amar and the audience any time her emotions may betray her and consistently smiles at Amar, as would be expected of a loving woman singing a song at a party for her fiancée (this display of emotion acceptable because they are already together in a union sanctioned by family and the world). The diegetic audience, including her father, see this performance as an expected spectacle – when Amar finally arrives, Anju's father exclaims that the "moths were waiting for the light of the *mehfil.*"

Although Sonia is not at this party, her presence is impacting Amar and Anju. Even though following through with the engagement, Amar had been pulling away from Anju ever since returning home, back to the space that Sonia also inhabits, and Amar's guilt becomes more palpable. Their friends and family are also there, presenting the added pressure to maintain their composure. This is Anju's first time seeing Amar since discovering the truth, and even if she wanted to confront him with this new information, it is impossible to do so here. Not just because of the presence of the people who will say things, but because out of love and respect, she cannot reveal his truth in this space. To do so would be injurious to his dignity and standing, and would ruin the festive mood of the event that Anju's father and their guests are partaking in. As a result, her veiled message to him is perhaps more injurious to him than she realises, because she still does not understand the true nature of this secret "marriage" to Sonia, and perhaps she would

not as readily forgive him for his actual crime. In singing this song, Anju has given Amar the means to terminate the relationship, her forgiveness negating the need for her to read the letter he wrote her, thus allowing him to leave her as he does in "*Jaane Wale Se Mulaqat*," discussed in Chapter One.

In this sequence, Anju has to perform this song to a large audience of her peers only hours after learning of Amar's betrayal. Although she may have had some time to process this information, she has to face Amar and his betrayal in a very public setting, forcing her to sing the song in a way that speaks to her awareness of social space. Similarly, in "Sab Kuch Seekha Humne," Raj is a poor man in a room of the wealthy elite, and is asked by his boss to sing a song only moments after learning that Aarti has been lying about her identity for as long as they have known each other. Here, while actively processing his hurt he is forced to adhere to class and social conventions in his performance, but taking advantage of the occasion (Aarti's birthday) he directly addresses her in a way that is appropriate while referencing earlier, socially inappropriate moments.

Anari – "*Sab Kuch Seekha Humne*" ("I've Learned Everything, But…")

Immediately after "*Dil Ki Nazar Se*" Raj and Aarti (as Asha) discuss the birthday party the next day, Aarti telling him not to come, citing the likely disrespect he will face from the wealthy people there, "Aarti" included. He agrees but says that he will come to *her* birthday someday, and when he does, he will "dance and sing and make [her] happy."

Raj comes to the party to deliver the cake, and Aarti's uncle tells him to stay, promising that there will be "food, drink, dance, and song." Aarti (as Aarti) makes her dramatic entrance, showing a version of herself, both in presentation and manner, that she could never be with Raj, and that Raj is not capable of providing the environment for. Here, Aarti is amongst her own people, people who like her uncle, believe this is where she belongs. This leaves Raj the only outsider at the party (other than Asha, who dutifully stays out of sight, again blending into the walls of the house). This class-based isolation is magnified by Aarti's uncle asking Raj (through Aarti) to sing a song, her uncle following up Raj's acceptance with a small introduction, where he somewhat condescendingly describes Raj as a "scholarly, learned man."[65] Following through on his earlier promise to Aarti, Raj starts to sing.

I've learned everything, but I haven't learned how to be cunning / <u>It's true, everyone, I am an</u> <u>anari</u>

Accompanied by a background dancer (one of Aarti's friends), Raj begins by immediately calling out Aarti on her lie, implicitly saying that *she* was the cunning one, making clear that he understands that she deceived him. Raj calling himself an *anari* directly references their previous conversations, including the lead up to "Woh Chaand Khila," the difference being that here, the term is overtly pejorative, a specific double-meaning that only Aarti can understand, and be hurt by. Raj smiles throughout - he is

[65] Having Aarti ask him is the more socially appropriate thing to do, as it is her birthday party, and Raj is her guest.

functioning as part of the promised entertainment, and to make others aware of his sadness would be rude.

The world explained many times who is mine, and who is a stranger (thus, unattainable) / Still, hiding my hurt, I worked to please your heart / [in doing so] I (seem to) insist on dying and disappearing / chorus
I've seen my heart's garden ruined and the colour of love fading / I have seen the living die over wealth and money / Those who die over love will die as beggars / chorus

Standing directly in front of Aarti, Raj is able to use the fact that it is her birthday as reason to justify his directly singing to her, something that (had this not been a performance) would have been inappropriate socially as two unmarried people, more so because of the wealth-class difference. While singing he gives her the occasional side-eye, including when he sings of presently attempting to make her happy (another promise from the day before). When Aarti's friend is dancing between verses, Raj uses those moments as an opportunity to look at Aarti more directly, even approaching her slightly. The diegetic audience here is blind to his real message and, sometimes, to him.[66] With the last *anari* of the chorus, Raj gives a slight bow to Aarti, and walking over to Asha, he bows to her as well.

I've seen real and fakes faces, and heavily guarded hearts / Ask my paining heart what golden dreams I had seen / I made unrealistic wishes[67] / chorus

Singing this immediately after acknowledging Aarti and Asha, both complicit in

[66] It can be assumed that her friend is dancing throughout the song, even when he is singing. Because Raj is the focus, we never see her while he is singing.
[67] The line is "I had my eye on the falling star to make a wish on it," but the previous line speaks to his "golden" dreams being impractical.

this lie, Raj moves around the room towards Aarti. Following his movement with her gaze, but never actually demonstrating enough interest to see him by turning her body, Aarti impassively looks straight ahead, turning her head slightly to indicate that she is listening. Standing behind her, he looks down when singing about his "golden dreams," picking at the couch as he does so. Aarti looks away again at this, and Raj finishes the song, giving his regards to the room before walking out of the party, leaving an amused crowd, a confused boss, and a humiliated Aarti.

In singing the song in such an unaffected way — smiling throughout, making the song about him rather than about an abstracted other — Raj makes his message to Aarti all the more poignant and like a form of punishment.[68] His smile is cold and his looks intended to make Aarti uncomfortable. Still, he does not use this moment to reveal what she has done. Had Raj made Aarti's deception known, not only would it violate the social conventions of being a guest in his boss's home but the resulting censure would be far worse in their long-term effects for her than for him. Aarti knows this — she is a young woman of the wealthy class, and as such is in the position to be most "ruined" by her association with him.

Throughout the film we are able to see the differences in the freedom of behaviour between the wealthy and poor, Raj and Aarti (as Asha) able to freely be together in public, and even spend time with Mrs. D'Sa, there operating under different

[68] To play the Devil's Advocate – in fairness to Raj – while I appreciate that Aarti later explained to Raj that the reason she lied was because she was "scared" and allegedly tried to tell him the truth on some occasions, she put a considerable amount of effort into her lies, and the level of commitment to her dramatized disdain for the wealthy, to me, makes her lies more grievous than her apology implies. That said, her clothing often made it very obvious what class she belonged to, but I suppose Raj was not trained to notice such things.

social conventions. These differences come to a head in this song, where for the first time Raj has to interact with Aarti in the presence of the wealthy, only moments after learning that she had been lying to him since their first meeting. In the ensuing song he is made to sing and she is made to listen, Raj capitalises on this moment and not only conveys his message to her but does so in a pointedly hurtful way.

Conclusion

Performative songs of this variety present themselves with many challenges for the singer and love interest. As these are performances to a diegetic audience consisting of the people that dictate the social conventions present within the moral universe of each film, both characters have to alter their behaviour because they are no longer in spaces that allow private or communal solitude. All in all, because these performances are forced, and otherwise not something the singer was planning on doing, the singing character is cruelly *given* the opportunity to express what they need to through song, their chosen mode of performance determining how they will be able to express what they want to, and what of it will be understood by their surrounding audience and their target audience.

These performances present as opportunities for the singer to address whatever tension exists between them, with the absolute guarantee that they will be heard by their love interest, who is similarly bound there and equally required to perform. This forced listening is capitalised upon differently from song to song, in some cases the singer using the song as an opportunity to tease and in others to chastise. In the flirty songs, the

acknowledged performance allows for a directness that would otherwise be inappropriate. In *Babul*, Ashok's negotiation of that public space is what gave him the access to Usha that they both misunderstood, and in *Aah,* Chandra's overtly direct performance is recognised for what it is by someone who is not Raj, her entire performance testing the waters of just how much is too much in order for the true message of the performance to rise to the surface for all to see. In *Amar*, Amar understands Anju's message, and she is in a sense giving him license to leave, but Anju does not understand her own message – she could not possibly, because she only believes that Amar married Sonia, and has no knowledge of the rape. Finally, with *Aah* we see how Nilu, adroitly allegorised the performative category – she told a story with a hidden meaning (*raja* and Raj), her performance of the story also seeming to mean one thing (sadness for missing Chandra) but actually meaning another (sadness at missing Raj).

Whereas in absentminded and communicative songs the social structures that dictate the character's lives are implicitly or conditionally present, in performative songs they are *actually* present and the problems they present are made explicit; being not only corporeal, but somehow temporal. The question here is no longer "what will people say?" with the sense that the news will spread and eventually those in the position to judge will do so. Instead, the threat of *the people* is immediate, and necessitates the most complex, most nuanced performance on part of either character, the increased number of eyes increasing the stakes for the characters (and the structures they are seeking to preserve).

EPILOGUE

Degrees of Authenticity: What *Will* People Say?

In framing these song sequences as each character's reaction to the social, cultural, or religious conventions present within the worlds of *Babul*, *Aah, Amar*, and *Anari*, my objectives here were to create distance between these emotive songs and spectacle songs such that it becomes unreasonable to include them in a single category, and to create categories that allowed for the perceived quality of each song to be defined in ways that accounted for affective and narrative functionality. The three categories, absentminded, communicative, and performative present with their own problems and modes of performance, each affording their singer (and listener, when applicable), an affective front that best allows them to express themselves while still mindful of the social, cultural, religious, familial, and romantic conventions that dictate the world of each film.

By beginning with the perceived binary of public and private, one that mirrors the assumed rigidity of the social conventions that guide our characters' filmic worlds, I aimed to show how the separation between the "private" space and "public" space is complex and undefined, because for the characters, the awareness of the public is something that, even if they could escape, they were only able to do so in a physical place or with an affective front that do not easily allow for the continued, sustained escape the characters desire. For them, there is no "real" escape from the ever-present dread of "*log kya kahenge?*" ("What will people say?"). But by navigating these emotional and social spaces through song, they are at least able to make sure that "the people" are given

nothing to say about the characters and whatever/whomever it is the character is shielding with their performance.

My objective was to show that by looking (*really* looking) and listening to these songs, we can see how these dominant narrative traits – the emotive songs – fundamentally shape how the characters are able to respond to the regulating forces in their respective societies, thus shaping the film as a whole. In absentminded songs, the seclusion is complicated by the awareness of other people, and in some cases, by the virtualised presence of other people. At first, communicative songs seem like absentminded songs with two characters, but the additional character brings with them the added weight of the romantic and marital conventions that are automatically attributed to them as a couple. Their mutual escape from the world is again, never really an escape, because even if no one sees them when they are together, eventually they have to come back from whatever isolated space they find to live out their stolen moments together. Finally, the performative songs require different affective fronts from each character, the singer and love interest both forced to respond not only to the overwhelming physical presence of many of the societal conventions that guide their behaviour, but also to each other, as in each case the singer is sending a very specific, targeted message to their love interest that only they, and we as the extradiegetic audience, are able to understand.

As suggested in the introduction, this decade is unique in that a majority of songs in films were not spectacles, but the film *Anari* illustrates how over the course of the decade the emotive *and* spectacle songs become more spectacular. This is true for various

elements of the films. Visually, that there was an increased formal awareness over the course of the decade was abundantly clear – there is no comparison between the camera work in *Babul* and *Amar*, but once we arrive at *Anari,* the camera work and *mis en scene* in "Tera Jaana" is incredibly self-conscious, Aarti always too perfectly framed in every shot in every place, and one cannot forget the background dancer featured in "Sab Kuch Seekha Humne," the shadows of her twirling hands reflecting on his face especially evocative of the class disparities present, but in just too spectacular a way. The music also changes – even the songs where characters were objectively sad had a more up-beat rhythm, and as translator, I can attest that the songs became increasingly easy to translate as the amount of Urdu steadily decreased, *Anari* the easiest to translate by far. Lastly, that spectacles grew increasingly spectacular also speaks to the dispersion of spectacularity into *all* songs – just compare the spectacle song and dance performances in *Aah* to the song "1959" from *Anari*.

Future Directions

This project began simply as my mission to defend the songs, such that I was internally asking each scholar who wrote that the songs have no narrative function, "*did you even watch the film*?" It seems they did, but obviously, not in the same ways. As the thesis developed, many other questions and directions presented themselves, questions that grew from my own observations of where this project began and where it ended, conversations with advisors, a specific film in the thesis, and most importantly, from the films that I chose not to include.

Early on, I chose to focus on films set in the present day of the 1950s, the songs reflective of the cultural and societal codification of values found in Indian culture then and today. When compared to historical or mythological films, films set in the contemporary times are far less likely to have as many spectacle songs, the other-worldliness of the former category better enhanced by the spectacular moments. However, despite how separated the reality of those films are from contemporary periods, it would it would be interesting to see if the same categories of emotive songs can be applied to those films, or if new categories would emerge entirely. These new categories need not be completely different fundamentally, and could be varieties of what I call "multi-modal" songs. These are songs that swing between modes — the song may begin as a spectacle song and briefly switch to communicative before returning to spectacle, or the song is effectively a duet, where the two singers in two different spaces are singing at the same time, but in two different modes. This duality in modes almost always includes spectacle, and I would argue that considering the interplay between songs of just one mode versus these multi-modal songs, especially when there are multiple in a single work, will present a new understanding of their films. For example, the film *Barsaat* (Raj Kapoor, 1949) has multiple multi-modal songs, each linked to, and illustrative of, the differences between Pran and Gopal, and how they choose to value love and the women who love them.

Because of the specific metrics of my thesis – that each film have all three emotive songs, and that the performative song be a *forced* performance – many, many films were disqualified. Two observations emerged as a result. The first, that this study

ended up being far more gendered than I had anticipated, and the second, that there is potential for deeper subcategorization within each emotive category.

While it is in no way surprising that the women are subjected to more codes and stricter expectations than their male counterparts, and thus have more openings and need for the affective front of song, the dominance of songs sung by women was kind of surprising. With this, I am not trying to make a claim about women singing more because they suffer through more — had I not limited the requirements for films that could qualify for this study, there would have been greater parity in the amount of songs sung by male and female characters. Spending more time on songs sung by male characters could perhaps reveal a different layer of codifications that are specific to male characters in the way the marital/religious conventions are more tightly bound to female characters.

As for subcategories to the categories, absentminded and performative songs have the most potential for further delineation. For example, there absentminded songs where the song functions primarily to lengthen the moment, the song in itself a different form of emotional expression that is not contradictory to the moments that precede or follow. It is not an issue of "what will people say?" and instead an issue of "what more can the character say?" In *Barsaat*, for example, in the song "*Chod Gaya Balam*" ("My Love Has Left Me), Pran is depressed before he starts singing, is depressed as he sings, and remains depressed after he finishes the song. With that, not all performative songs have to be forced, the singer's agency of choice perhaps adding a deeper emotional quality to the message they have for their intended audience. For example, "*Man Mohana*" ("My Beloved") from *Seema* (1955) was a somewhat coaxed, but not forced performance, and

Gauri (Nutan) was thrilled to be able to perform for Ashok (Balraj Sahni). Her desire to perform changed his enjoyment of the performance, deepening the quality of the feelings the two characters were beginning to develop for each other.

Joy, as expressed through song, is also worth exploring. Out of all four films looked at here, and the thirty-eight songs therein, there is only one absentminded song where the singing character is expressing joy ("*Jo Main Jaanti*" from *Aah*). I watched at least twenty other films before selecting these four, and of those that didn't make the cut, there may have been three or four happy absentminded songs. So out of twenty-plus films, and the 200-or-so songs, there are only four or five instances of someone singing happily whilst alone, and all remaining solitary songs are melancholic in tone. Recontextualizing the available cultural and social codes to explain why happiness is not something to be kept for oneself, or alternately, why sadness is definitely meant to be kept private, is something that merits further study.

From a more industrial perspective, doing a studio-to-studio comparison will likely manifest in different trends in regards to the growing spectacularity of all song sequences, emotive and spectacle alike. Similarly, an actor-to-actor comparison may point to similar conclusions, but in the context of the growing star power of each actor, and how self-consciously they choose to have the character's identity be looped in with their own (for example, Raj Kapoor's "Raj" in the 1959 *Anari* was more obviously overacted than the "Raj" in *Aah* (1953), or the "Pran" in *Barsaat* (1949)). Raj Kapoor's star power and self-awareness is no more obvious than the exaggerated spectacle sequence of Raj as "The Tramp" in "1959" (*Anari*). This excess is perhaps partially due

to the generic differences in these films, as *Anari* was marketed as comedy film. Looking at songs genre-to-genre could also result in genre-specific versions of the four song types (including spectacle).

As for spectacles, I made a conscious decision to completely avoid these songs in this study. This was primarily motivated by the fact that I was trying to show that there is a difference between the spectacle and non-spectacle, but in truth, a part of me believed that I too, would not find any affective or narrative value in this category of songs. However, my extensive research has shown to me that not all spectacle songs are inherently precluded from having similar affective and emotive qualities as the absentminded, communicative, and performative songs (I am not including the multi-modal, spectacle/emotive songs here). Consider "*Ek Baath Kahoon*" ("If I May Say") from *Amar.* A dance performance at the mela, the song is the perfect spectacle – there are background dancers, Sonia is dancing, there is a large audience watching and enjoying, and Nimmi's performance of the actual singing is less careful than in her absentminded performances – in short, spectacle. But, if considered metaphorically, this song is about a woman singing to her lover, asking him if she can tell him something. This song takes place shortly after Amar gives Anju his Om necklace, and the way Anju shyly looks away from Amar and nervously fidgets with her handkerchief speaks to how the lyrics of the song actually apply to her, while also applying to Sonia, who at this point has developed a crush on Amar, and in singing about the things she is asking to be able to say, she is in turn saying that which she needs to — he's just not listening.

Ultimately, there is so much more to be done! By opening the door to

experiencing these songs fully, hopefully more and more doors continue to open such that the study of popular Hindi cinema and Bollywood can be as rich as one of the most prolific national film industries in the world deserves.

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